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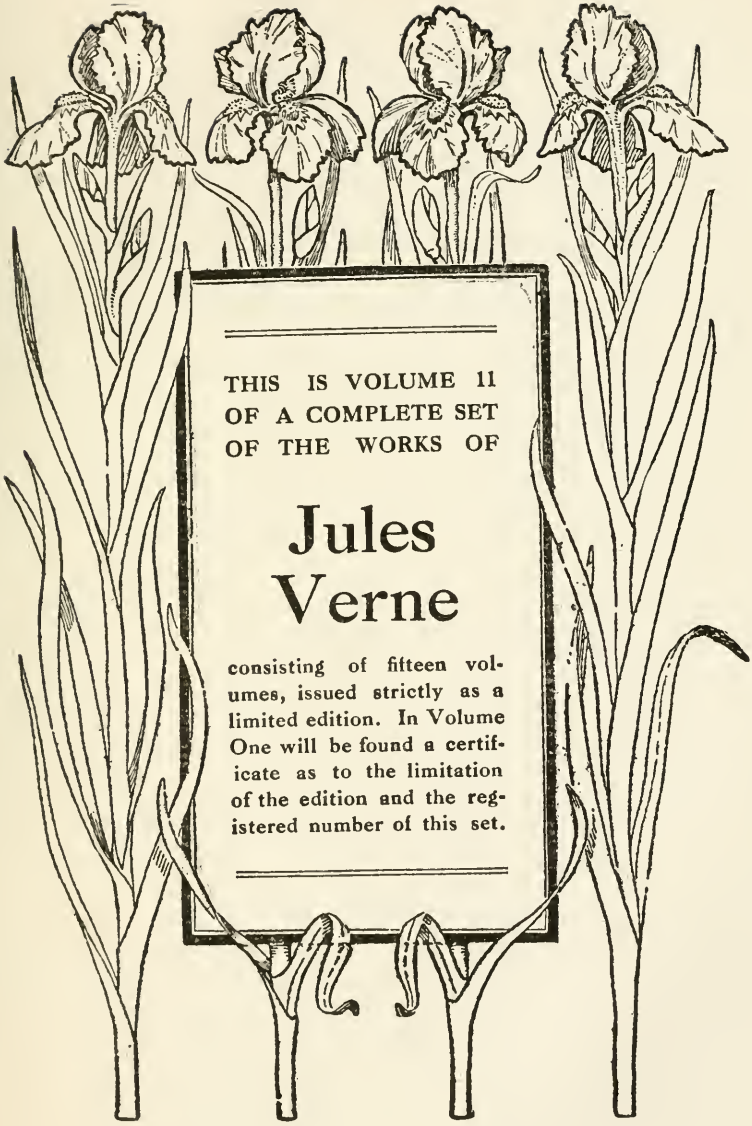

THIS IS VOLUME 11
OF A COMPLETE SET
OF THE WORKS OF

Jules Verne

consisting of fifteen volumes, issued strictly as a limited edition. In Volume One will be found a certificate as to the limitation of the edition and the registered number of this set.

THE GIANT RAFT.

To house the crew a good many huts were required, and these gave to the jangada the appearance of a small village got adrift, and, to tell the truth, it was a better built and better peopled village than many of those on the Upper Amazon. * * * *

In the bow regular warehouses had arisen, containing the goods which Joam Garral was carrying to Belem at the same time as the products of his forests. * * * *

The chapel then was built in the center of the jangada, and a little bell surmounted it. It was small enough, undoubtedly, and it could not hold the whole of the crew, but it was richly decorated, and if Joam Garral found his own house on the raft, Padre Passanha had no cause to regret the poverty-stricken church of Iquitos.—Page 308.

WORKS of JULES VERNE

EDITED BY

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CONTENTS

Volume Eleven

	PAGE
Introduction	1
The Five Hundred Millions of the Begum .	3
The Tribulations of a Chinaman in China .	131
The Giant Raft	
Eight Hundred Leagues on the Amazon .	253

ILLUSTRATIONS

Volume Eleven

	PAGE
The Giant Raft	Frontispiece
In the Enemy's Citadel	112
Wang Prepares the Death Stroke . . .	224

INTRODUCTION TO VOLUME ELEVEN

HE FIVE HUNDRED MILLIONS OF THE BEGUM," published in 1879, is an interesting tale in itself, and in its fancy of the different uses to which untold wealth might be put in the hands of different men.

The moral lesson is also strong. Riches are shown as meaning to the world in general only selfishness and self-indulgence. To the two men who possess the millions, they become, in the hands of one, merely an instrument for gathering more millions. To the other, the altruist, they open a means of uplifting the entire world. Thus we get on the one side Verne's view of a modern Utopia; on the other, his idea of the inferno whither he believes modern centralization of capital and industry are tending. This is the only one of Verne's works in which he turns political economist.

This antagonism, thus drawn between two views of society, the two cities erected by the rivals, is made doubly interesting by the racial bitterness to which in this book Verne for the first time gives vehement expression. It must be remembered that his books, especially with his method of frequently rewriting them, were usually begun several years before the date of their publication. At the close of the war of 1870-71, France lay prostrate and helpless beneath the heel of Germany. Hence Germans, and back of them the whole Teutonic and Anglo-Saxon race, were anathema to this patriotic Frenchman. In "Off on a Comet" he had for the first time chosen a French hero. Hector Servadac is made governor-general of the comet, which is itself called Gallia. Before that, the Frenchmen of his books had all been light and whimsical: Ardan the heedless in the "Trip to the Moon," Paganel the astound-

ingly absent-minded in "In Search of the Castaways," Passepartout the irresponsible in "Round the World." But Servadac, while he retains his Gallic lightness, is keen and strong and resolute, a true leader of men. As for the Germans, they had figured before only in the extravagant but not ill-natured picture of the professor in "The Center of the Earth." Now, in "Off on a Comet" Verne suddenly depicts with a bitterness new to him the ugliest character he had yet drawn, the trader Hakkabut, "a Jew and a German." Then, in his Professor Schultze of "The Five Hundred Millions of the Begum," he outdoes himself in the savage, sneering, impossible picture of the utterly vulgar, selfish, insensate, dull, and yet iron-willed and powerful Schultze. Nevertheless this hideously ugly and unhuman figure undeniably remains grotesquely and suggestively German. It is a masterly piece of satire. It is race antagonism run riot.

From this grim tale it is a relief to turn to the whimsical fantasy, "The Tribulations of a Chinaman in China," issued in the same year. This is assuredly one of Verne's most charming though lightest books. From the philosophical opening conversation on the value of life, it slips easily into the peculiarly topsy-turvy Chinese idea of employing your best friend to slay you secretly. Then comes the mad chase across all China, the pursuing victim resolutely hunting down the reluctant ex-rebel and incompetent assassin, while the victim's two comic guards against himself cling ever at his elbow.

The geographical pictures of China are finished and perfect as all the master's work of this description. The only scientific touch in the whole, the sea-trip in the rubber suits, is not so serious as to be out of keeping with the light-hearted whimsical spirit of the entire tale.

In "The Giant Raft," Verne started another of those two volumed, double named stories which he had at first preferred. Only the first book "Eight Hundred Leagues on the Amazon" appears in the present volume. The other "The Cryptogram" follows in volume twelve.

The Five Hundred Millions of the Begum

CHAPTER I

ENTER MR. SHARP

"REALLY these English newspapers are very well written," said the worthy doctor to himself, as he leant back in a great leather easy-chair. Dr. Sarrasin had all his life been given to soliloquizing, one of the many results of absence of mind.

He was a man of fifty, or thereabouts; his features were refined; clear, lively eyes shone through his steel spectacles, and the expression of his countenance, although grave, was genial. He was one of those people, looking at whom one says at the first glance, "There is an honest man!"

Notwithstanding the early hour, and the easy style of his dress, the doctor had already shaved and put on a white cravat. Scattered near him on the carpet and on sundry chairs, in the sitting-room of his hotel at Brighton, lay copies of the *Times,* the *Daily Telegraph,* and the *Daily News.* It was not much more than ten o'clock, yet the doctor had been out walking in the town, had visited an hospital, returned to his hotel, and read in the principal London journals the full report of a paper communicated by him two evenings previously at a meeting of the great International Hygienic Conference on the *"Compte globules du sang,"* or "blood-corpuscle computator," an instrument he had invented, and which even in England keeps its French name. Before him stood a breakfast-tray covered with a snowy napkin, on which were placed a well-dressed cutlet, a cup of hot and fragrant tea, and a plate of that buttered toast which English cooks, thanks to English bakers, can make to perfection.

"Yes," he repeated, "these journals are really admirably well written, there is no denying the fact. Here is the speech of the president, the reply by Dr. Cicogna of Naples,

my own paper in full, all as it were caught in the air, seized and photographed at once!

"Dr. Sarrasin of Douai rose and addressed the meeting. The honorable member spoke in French, and said, 'My auditors will permit me to express myself in my own language, which I am sure they understand far better than I can speak theirs.'

"Five columns in small print! I cannot decide which reports it best, the *Times* or the *Telegraph*, each seems so precise."

Dr. Sarrasin had reached this point in his meditations, when one of the waiters of the establishment, a gentleman most correctly dressed in black, entered, and presenting a card, inquired whether "Monsiou" was "at home" to a visitor. This appellation of "Monsiou" the English consider it necessary to bestow indiscriminately on every Frenchman—in the same way they would think it a breach of all the rules of civility did they fail to address an Italian as "Signor," and a German as "Herr." Perhaps on the whole the custom is a good one—it certainly has the advantage of at once indicating nationalities.

Considerably surprised to hear of a visitor in a country where he was acquainted with no one, the doctor took the card, and read with increased perplexity the following address:

Mr. Sharp,
Solicitor, 93, Southampton Row, London.

He knew that a "solicitor" meant what he should call an "*avoué,*" and signified a lawyer of the compound nature of attorney, procurator, and notary.

"What possible business can Mr. Sharp have with me?" thought the doctor. "Can I have got into some scrape or other without knowing it? Are you sure this card is intended for me?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, Monsiou."

"Well, let the gentleman come in."

A youngish man entered the room, whom the doctor at once classed in the great family of "death's heads." Thin dry lips, drawn back from long white teeth, hollow temple-bones, displayed beneath skin like parchment, the complexion of a mummy, and small gray eyes as sharp as needles,

quite justified the title. The rest of the skeleton, from the heels to the occiput, was hidden from view beneath an ulster, of a large checker pattern; his hand grasped a patent-leather bag.

This personage entered, bowing in a hasty manner, placed bag and hat on the ground, took a chair without waiting to have one offered, and opened his business by saying, "William Henry Sharp, Junior, of the firm of Billows, Green, Sharp & Co. Have I the honor of speaking to Dr. Sarrasin?"

"Yes, sir."

"François Sarrasin?"

"That certainly is my name."

"Of Douai?"

"I reside at Douai."

"Your father's name was Isidore Sarrasin?"

"It was."

"Let us conclude him to have been Isidore Sarrasin." Mr. Sharp drew a notebook from his pocket, consulted it, and resumed, "Isidore Sarrasin died at Paris in 1857, 6th Arrondissement, Rue Taranne, Number 54—the Hôtel des Ecoles, now demolished."

"Perfectly correct," said the doctor, more and more astonished. "But will you have the kindness to explain——?"

"His mother's name," pursued the imperturbable Mr. Sharp, "was Julie Langévol, originally of Bar-le-Duc, daughter of Benedict Langévol, who lived in the alley Loriol, and died in 1812, as is shown by the municipal registers of the said town—these registers are a valuable institution, sir—highly valuable—hem—hem—and sister of Jean Jacques Langévol, drum-major in the 36th Light——"

"I assure you," interrupted Dr. Sarrasin, confounded by this intimate acquaintance with his genealogy, "that you are better informed on these points than I am myself. It is true that my grandmother's family name was Langévol, and that is all I know about her."

"About the year 1807 she left the town of Bar-le-Duc with your grandfather, Jean Sarrasin, whom she had married in 1799. They settled at Melun, where he worked as a tinsmith, and where, in 1811, Julie Langévol, Sarrasin's wife, died, leaving only one child, Isidore Sarrasin, your

father. From that time, up to the date of his death, discovered at Paris, the thread is lost."

"I can supply it," said the doctor, interested in spite of himself by this wonderful precision. "My grandfather settled in Paris for the sake of the education of his son, whom he destined to the medical profession. He died in 1832, at Palaiseau, near Versailles, where my father practised as a physician, and where I was born in 1822."

"You are my man," resumed Mr. Sharp. "No brothers or sisters?"

"None. I was the only son; my mother died two years after my birth. Now, sir, will you tell me——?"

Mr. Sharp stood up.

"Rajah Bryah Jowahir Mothooranath," said he, pronouncing the names with the respect shown by every Englishman to a title, "I am happy to have discovered you, and to be the first to congratulate you."

"The man is deranged," thought the doctor; "it is not at all uncommon among these death's heads."

The solicitor read this opinion in his eyes. "I am not mad in the slightest degree," said he calmly. "You are at the present moment the sole known heir to the title of Rajah, which Jean Jacques Langévol—who became a naturalized British subject in 1819, succeeded to the property of his wife the Begum Gokool, and died in 1841, leaving only one son, an idiot, who died without issue in 1869—was allowed to assume by the Governor-General of the province of Bengal.

"The value of the estate has risen during the last thirty years to about five millions of pounds sterling. It remained sequestered and under guardianship, almost the whole of the interest going to increase the capital during the life of the imbecile son of Jean Jacques Langévol.

"In 1870 the value of the inheritance was given in round numbers to be twenty-one millions of pounds sterling, or five hundred and twenty-five millions of francs. In fulfillment of an order of the law court of Agra, countersigned by that of Delhi, and confirmed by the Privy Council, the whole of the landed and personal property has been sold, and the sum realized has been placed in the Bank of England.

"The actual sum is five hundred and twenty-seven millions of francs, which you can withdraw by a check as soon

as you have proved your genealogical identity in the Court of Chancery. And in the meantime I am authorized by Messrs. Trollop, Smith & Co., Bankers, to offer you advances to any amount."

Dr. Sarrasin sat petrified—for some minutes he could not utter a word; then, impressed by a conviction that this fine story was without any foundation in fact, he quietly said, "After all, sir, where are the proofs of this, and in what way have you been led to find me out?"

"The proofs are here, sir," replied Mr. Sharp, tapping on his shiny leather bag. "As to how I discovered you, it has been in a very simple way: I have been searching for you for five years. It is the speciality of our firm to find heirs for the numerous fortunes which year by year are left in escheat in the British dominions.

"For five years the question of the inheritance of the Begum Gokool has exercised all our ingenuity and activity. We have made investigations in every direction, passed in review hundreds of families of your name without finding that of Isidore Sarrasin. I was almost convinced that there was not another of the name in all France, when yesterday morning I read in the *Daily News* a report of the meeting of the Hygienic Conference, and observed that among the members was a Dr. Sarrasin, of whom I had never before heard.

"Referring instantly to my notes, and to hundreds of papers on the subject of this estate, I ascertained with surprise that the town of Douai had entirely escaped our notice. With the conviction that I had got on the right scent, I took the train for Brighton, saw you leave the meeting, and all doubt vanished. You are the living image of your great-uncle Langévol, of whom we possess a photograph taken from a portrait by the Indian painter Saranoni."

Mr. Sharp took a photograph from his pocketbook and handed it to Dr. Sarrasin. It represented a tall man with a magnificent beard, a crested turban, and a richly brocaded robe. He was seated after the manner of conventional portraits of generals in the army, appearing to be drawing up a plan of attack, while attentively regarding the spectator. In the background could be dimly discerned the smoke of battle and a charge of cavalry.

"A glance at these papers will inform you on this matter

better than I can do," continued Mr. Sharp; "I will leave them with you, and return in a couple of hours, if you will then permit me to take your orders."

So saying, Mr. Sharp drew from the depths of his glazed bag seven or eight bundles of documents, some printed, some manuscript, placed them on the table, and backed out of the room, murmuring, "I have the honor to wish the Rajah Bryah Jowahir Mothooranath a very good morning."

Partly convinced, partly ridiculing the idea, the doctor took the papers and began to peruse them. A rapid examination sufficed to show him the truth of Mr. Sharp's statements, and to remove his doubts. Among the printed documents he read the following:

Evidence placed before the Right Honorable Lords of Her Majesty's Privy Council on the 5th of January, 1870, touching the vacant succession of the Begum Gokool of Ragginahra, in Bengal. Points of the case. The question concerns the rights of possession to certain landed estates, together with a variety of edifices, palaces, mercantile establishments, villages, personal properties, treasure, arms, etc., etc., forming the inheritance of the Begum Gokool of Ragginahra.

From evidence submitted to the civil tribunal of Agra, and to the Superior Court at Delhi, it appears that in 1819, the Begum Gokool, widow of Rajah Luckmissur, and possessed in her own right of considerable wealth, married a foreigner, of French origin, by name Jean Jacques Langévol.

This foreigner, after serving until 1815 in the French army as drum-major in the 36th Light Cavalry, embarked at Nantes, upon the disbandment of the army of the Loire, as supercargo of a merchant ship. He reached Calcutta, passed into the interior, and speedily obtained the appointment of military instructor in the small native army which the Rajah Luckmissur was authorized to maintain. In this army he rose to be commander-in-chief, and shortly after the Rajah's death he obtained the hand of his widow.

In consideration of various important services rendered to the English residents at Agra by Jean Jacques Langévol, he was constituted a British subject, and the Governor-General of Bengal obtained for the husband of the Begum the title of Rajah of Bryah Jowahir Mothooranath, which was the name of one of the most considerable of her estates.

The Begum died in 1839, leaving the whole of her wealth and property to Langévol, who survived her only two years.

Their only child was imbecile from his infancy. The inheritance was carefully managed by trustees until his death, which occurred in 1869.

To this immense heritage there is no known heir. The courts of Agra and Delhi having ordered its sale by auction, on the application of the local government acting for the state, we have the honor to request from the Lords of the Privy Council a confirmation of their decision, etc. Here followed the signatures.

Copies of legal documents from Agra and Delhi, deeds of sale, an account of the efforts made in France to discover the next of kin to Langévol's family, and a whole mass of imposing evidence of the like nature, left Dr. Sarrasin no room for doubt or hesitation. Between him and the five hundred and twenty-seven millions of francs deposited in the strong rooms of the Bank of England there was but a step, the production of authentic certificates of certain births and deaths.

Such a stroke of fortune being enough to dazzle the imagination of the most sober-minded man, the good doctor could not contemplate it without some emotion. Yet it was of short duration, and exhibited simply by a rapid walk for a few minutes up and down his apartment. Quickly recovering his self-possession, he accused himself of weakness for yielding to this feverish agitation, threw himself into his chair, and remained for a time lost in profound reflection.

Then suddenly rising, he resumed his walk backwards and forwards, while his eyes shone with a pure light as though a noble and generous project burned within his breast. He seemed to welcome, to caress, to encourage, and finally to adopt it.

A knock at the door. Mr. Sharp returned. "I ask pardon a thousand times for my doubts as to the correctness of your information," said the doctor in a cordial tone. "You see me now perfectly convinced, and extremely obliged to you for the trouble you have taken."

"Not at all—mere matter of business—in the way of my profession—nothing more," replied Mr. Sharp. "May I venture to hope that the Rajah will remain our client?"

"That is understood. I place the whole affair in your hands. I only beg you to desist from giving me that absurd title."

"Absurd!—a title worth twenty millions!" were the words Mr. Sharp would have uttered had he known no better; but he said, "Certainly, sir, if you wish it. As you please, sir. I am now going to return by train to London, where I shall await your orders."

"May I keep these documents?" inquired the doctor.

"Most assuredly—we retain copies."

Dr. Sarrasin was left alone. He seated himself at his desk, took out a sheet of paper, and wrote as follows:

"Brighton, 28th October, 1871.

"My dear Child,

"We have become possessed of an enormous fortune, a fortune absurdly colossal. Do not fancy that I have lost my senses, but read the printed papers enclosed in my letter. You will there plainly see that I am proved to be the heir to a native title in India, and a sum equivalent to many millions of francs, actually deposited in the Bank of England.

"I can feel sure of the sentiments with which you, my dear Otto, will receive this news. You will perceive, as I do myself, the new duties which such wealth will impose upon us, and the danger we are in of being tempted to use it unwisely

"It is but an hour since I was made aware of the fact, and already the overpowering sense of responsibility seems to lessen the pleasure it first gave me as I thought of you. This change may be fatal instead of fortunate to our destiny. In the modest position of pioneers of science we were content and happy in obscurity. Shall we continue to be so? I doubt it,—unless—perhaps—could I venture to mention an idea which has flashed across my brain—unless this same fortune were to become in our hands a new and powerful engine of science, a mighty tool in the great work of civilization and progress! We will talk about this. Write to me—let me know very soon what impression this wonderful news makes on your mind—and let your mother hear of it from you. Sensible woman as she is, I am convinced she will receive it calmly. As to your sister, she is

too young to have her head turned by anything of the sort. Besides, that little head of hers is a very sober one, and even if she could comprehend all that this change in our position implies, I believe she would take it more quietly than any of us.

"Remember me cordially to Max; I connect him with all my schemes for the future. Your affectionate father,

"François Sarrasin."

This letter was addressed to—

Monsieur Octave Sarrasin,
Student at the Upper School of Arts and Manufactures,
32, Rue du Roi de Sicile, Paris.

Then the doctor put on his overcoat, took his hat, and went to the Conference.

In a quarter of an hour, the worthy man had forgotten all about his millions.

CHAPTER II
A PAIR OF CHUMS

Dr. Sarrasin's son Octavius was not exactly what one would call a dunce. He was neither a blockhead nor a genius, neither plain nor handsome, neither tall nor short, neither dark nor fair. His complexion was nut-brown, and he was altogether an average specimen of the middle class. At school he had never taken a very high place, although occasionally gaining a prize. He had failed in his first examination for passing into the College of Engineers, but a second attempt admitted him, although with no great credit. There was a want of decision in his character—his mind was content with inaccuracies; he was one of those people who are satisfied to have a general idea of a subject, and who walk through life by moonlight. Such men float at the mercy of fate, as corks do on the crests of waves. They are driven to the equator or to the pole, according to whether the wind blows north or south. Chance decides their career. Had Dr. Sarrasin altogether understood his son's character, he might have hesitated to write the letter he did; but the wisest man may be a blind father.

Fortunately for Octavius, he had during his school life come under the influence of an energetic nature, which by

its vigorous strength ruled him for his good, albeit somewhat tyrannically. He formed a close friendship with one of his companions, Max Bruckmann, a native of Alsace, a year younger than himself, but far his superior in physical, intellectual and moral vigor.

Max Bruckmann, left an orphan at the age of twelve, inherited a small income, just sufficient to defray the expense of his education. His life at college would have been monotonous had he not passed the holidays with Octavius, or Otto, as he called his friend, at his home. The young Alsacian very soon felt himself one of Dr. Sarrasin's family. Beneath a cold exterior lay a warm and sensitive nature, and he considered that he was bound for life to those who acted like father and mother to him.

He positively adored Dr. Sarrasin, his wife, and their pretty thoughtful little daughter; his heart expanded under the influence of their kindness, and he greatly wished to be useful to them by helping Jeannette, who loved her studies, to advance in them, and thoroughly to cultivate her excellent abilities and firm, sensible mind, while he longed to lead Otto to become as good a man as his father. This latter task he well knew to be by no means so easy as the former, yet Max was resolved to attain his double purpose.

Max Bruckmann was one of those trusty and gallant champions whom year by year Alsace sends forth to do battle on the great arena of life in Paris.

As a mere child he distinguished himself by the strength and flexibility of his muscles, as much as by the vivacity and intelligence of his mind. Inwardly full of life and courage, his outward form exhibited strong muscular development rather than graceful proportions. At college he excelled in everything he attempted, whether sport or study. Reaping an annual harvest of prizes, he thought the year wasted if he failed to gain all within his reach. At twenty his form was large, robust, and in splendid condition; his movements were animated, and his well-shaped head betokened unusual intelligence. When he entered college, the same year with Octavius, he stood second, and was resolved to be first when the time came for leaving it.

Without his persistent energy to urge him forward, Octavius would never have got in at all. For the space of a whole year Max had driven and goaded him to work, had

regularly compelled him to succeed. He entertained for this friend of weak and vacillating nature a sentiment of kindly compassion such as one might suppose a lion to exhibit toward a little puppy. He liked to feel that he could nourish this parasitical plant from the superabundance of his own sap, and cause it to flourish and blossom beside him.

The war of 1870 broke out at the close of one of their terms. Max, full of patriotic grief at the fate which threatened Strasburg and Alsace, hastened to enlist in the 31st Regiment of Light Infantry. Otto, as Max called him, and as we will for the future, at once followed his example. Side by side the two friends, stationed in the outposts of Paris, went through the severe campaign of the siege. At Champigny Max received a ball in his right arm, at Buzenval an epaulet on his left shoulder. Otto received neither wound nor decoration. It could not have been his fault, for he followed his friend everywhere, scarcely half a dozen yards in his rear. But those half-dozen yards made all the difference.

After the peace, the two friends resumed their studies, occupying modest apartments together near the college.

The recent misfortunes of France, the loss to her of Lorraine and Alsace, had matured the character of Max—he felt and spoke like a man. "It is the vocation of the youth of France," said he; "to repair the errors of their fathers. By genuine hard work alone can this be done."

Max rose every morning at five o'clock, and made Otto do the same. He obliged him to be punctual at his classes, and never lost sight of him during the hours of recreation. The evening was devoted to study, with occasional pauses for a pipe or a cup of coffee. At ten they retired to rest, their hearts content, their brains well filled. A game at billiards now and then, a well-chosen play or concert, a ride to the forest of Verrières, a country walk, and twice a week a lesson in fencing and boxing—these were their amusements.

From time to time Otto, casting curious eyes at the very questionable enjoyments of other students, would make feeble attempts at revolt, and talk of going to see Cæsar Leroux, who was "studying law," and passed most of his time at the beer-shop of St. Michel; but Max treated these

fancies with such utter contempt and derision that they usually passed off quietly.

On the 29th of October, 1871, about seven o'clock in the evening, the two friends were seated, as was their wont, side by side at the same table, with a shaded lamp between them.

Max was working a problem in applied mathematics, relative to the stability of blocks, and had thrown himself heart and soul into his subject. Otto was devoting himself sedulously to something which he thought of much greater consequence, the brewing of a pint of coffee. It was one of the few things in which he flattered himself he really excelled, perhaps because he had daily practice in it, thereby escaping for a few minutes the troublesome business of squaring equations, which he considered that Max really did carry too far.

Drop by drop he let his boiling water pass through a thick layer of powdered mocha, and he ought to have been contented with such tranquil happiness; but he was annoyed at the devoted industry of Max. and felt an unconquerable desire to interrupt him.

"It would be a good plan to buy a percolator," said he, suddenly. "This ancient and solemn method of filtering is a disgrace to our modern civilization."

"Do buy a percolator; it will perhaps prevent your wasting an hour every evening with this cookery," replied Max, and he returned to his problem.

"The intrados of a vault is an ellipsoid; let *A B C D* be that principal ellipse which contains the two axes——"

At this moment came a rap at the door.

"A letter for Monsieur Octave Sarrasin." It may be imagined that this interruption was heartily welcomed by that young gentleman!

"Ah! from my father—it is his hand I see. Come, this is something like a letter!" he exclaimed, as he weighed the packet of papers in his hand.

Max knew that the doctor was in England. He had been in Paris a week before on his way there, and had treated the two lads to a dinner fit for an emperor, at the Palais Royal; for although that once famous place was quite out of fashion, Dr. Sarrasin continued to regard it as the center of Parisian taste and refinement.

"Let me know what your father says about his Hygienic Conference," said Max. "It was a good idea of his to attend that; French 'savants' are inclined to be too exclusive." And Max returned to his problem.

"The extrados will be formed by another similar ellipsoid, having its center at the point *O* on the vertical *O C*——"

A shout from Otto made him look up.

"What is the matter?" he asked with some alarm, seeing his friend turn pale.

"Read this!" cried Otto, completely astonished by the news he had received.

Max took the letter, read it all through, read it a second time, glanced over the documents enclosed, and said—

"This is curious!" Then he filled his pipe, and lighted it methodically.

Otto watched him—all anxiety for his opinion. "Do you think it can be true?" he exclaimed with a choking voice.

"True?—to be sure it is. Your father has too much common sense, his judgment is too good to let him accept rashly so well-authenticated a statement as this. Besides, the proofs are there—it is perfectly plain."

The pipe was now thoroughly lighted. Max resumed his work.

Otto sat with his arms hanging down, unable even to finish his coffee, far less to bring two ideas together. He could not help speaking, just to convince himself that he was not asleep. "But, I say, Max, if this is true it is downright overwhelming! All these millions! why—it is an enormous fortune, mind you!"

Max looked up and nodded, "Yes, enormous is the word for it. Most likely there is not one such in France, a few in the United States, five or six in England—not above fifteen or twenty in the world altogether."

"And a title into the bargain!" resumed Otto. "A foreign title—what is it? let's see—'Rajah!' Not that I ever was ambitious of having a title, but if it comes in one's way, why it certainly sounds more imposing than plain Sarrasin."

Max shot forth a puff of smoke, and uttered not a word. That puff of smoke distinctly said, "Pooh! Pooh!"

"Certainly," continued Otto, "I should never have stuck

a 'de' before my name, or assumed anything high-sounding as some people do; but to inherit a real genuine title, and to take rank among the great princes of India, without any possible chance of doubt or confusion!"

The pipe kept puffing "Pooh! Pooh!"

"My dear fellow," said Otto decidedly, "you may say what you like, but I can tell you there is 'a good deal in blood' as the English express it."

He stopped short as he caught the mocking smile in Max's eyes, and returned to the contemplation of his millions. "Do you recollect, Max, how Binôme, our old arithmetic master, used to impress upon us every year in his opening lesson, that five hundred millions was a number beyond the grasp of a human mind unaided by the resources of written figures? One has to consider that a man spending a franc every minute would take more than a thousand years to pay away such a sum. Well, it really is strange to think one has inherited five hundred millions of francs!"

"Five hundred million francs is it?" cried Max with more interest than he had yet shown. "Shall I tell you the best thing you can do? Give it to France for payment of her ransom, she only requires ten times as much!"

"For mercy's sake, don't suggest such an idea to my father!" cried Otto, looking quite scared. "He really might adopt it. I can tell you that he already has some notion of the kind in his head. Some investment he might certainly make, but at least let us have the interest."

"Come, we shall have you turn out a financier after all!" said Max. "Something tells me, my poor Otto, that it would have been better for your father, with his upright, intelligent mind, if this great fortune had been of a more reasonable size. I would rather see you with an income of five-and-twenty thousand to share with your good little sister than with this great mountain of gold!" And Max went back to his work.

As to Otto, he could not settle to anything, and fidgeted about the room till his friend got rather impatient and said, "You had better go out and take a walk, Otto; it is clear you are fit for nothing this evening!"

"You are quite right! I really am not," replied Otto, who joyfully caught at this excuse for leaving off work,

and seizing his hat, he clattered downstairs, and was soon in the street.

He presently stopped beneath a bright gaslight, and read his father's letter again. He wanted to make sure he was not dreaming. "Five hundred millions of francs!" he kept repeating. "That would be at least five-and-twenty millions a year. Why, if my father will only give me one million a year—say quarterly or half yearly—as my allowance, how happy I should be! Money can do so much. I am sure I should make an excellent use of it. I'm not a fool—not a bit of it. Didn't I get into the upper school? And then that title! I'm sure I could easily support the dignity of a title."

As he passed along he looked into all the shops. "I shall have a fine house, horses, one for Max, of course. I becoming rich myself, he will become so likewise. Only think! Five hundred millions! But somehow, now a fortune comes, it seems to me as though I had expected it. Something whispered that I should not be poring over books and plans all my life."

As Otto revolved these thoughts, he was passing along beneath the arcades of the Rue de Rivoli. Reaching the Champs Elysées, he turned up the Rue Royal, and reached the Boulevards. The splendid shop-fronts, which formerly he regarded with indifference as exhibiting things utterly useless to him, now attracted lively attention, as he considered, with a thrill of delight, that he could at any moment possess any or all of these treasures.

"For me," said he to himself, "for me, all this fine linen, all these exquisite soft cloths are manufactured; for me watchmakers construct timepieces and chronometers; for my pleasure the brilliant lusters of theater and opera shed their dazzling light, violins scrape, prima donnas sing their enchanting strains. For me horse dealers train thoroughbreds, and the Café Anglaise is lighted up. All Paris is mine! Everything is at my disposal! Travel! to be sure I shall travel. I shall go and visit my Indian possessions. As likely as not I shall buy a pagoda some day, priests and all, and the ivory idols into the bargain. I shall have elephants of my own! I shall have splendid guns and rifles—go tiger-shooting. And I must have a beautiful boat. A boat, what am I thinking about? a fine steam yacht, that's what I shall have—go where I choose, stop

as often as I like. Talking of steam, I have to give this news to my mother. Suppose I start for Douai? There is college to be considered. But then, what's the use of college to me now?"

"But Max, I must let him know. I should send him a message; of course he will understand that under present circumstances I am in haste to see my mother and sister."

Otto entered an office, and sent a telegram to inform his friend that he was gone, and would return in a couple of days. Then, hailing a cab, he was driven to the terminus of the Northern Railway. Settling himself in the corner of a carriage, he continued to follow out his dreaming fancies, until, at two o'clock in the morning, he arrived at Douai; hurried to his father's house, and rang the night bell so noisily, that not only the family, but all the neighbors were aroused by the peal. Night-capped heads popped out at various windows.

"Somebody is very ill!—who can it be?" inquired one and another.

"The doctor is not at home!" screamed the old servant from her attic window.

"It is I! it is Otto! Come down and let me in, Fanchon!"

After a delay of ten minutes, Otto was admitted into the house. His mother and sister hastily robed in dressing-gowns were all anxiety to learn the cause of this visit.

The doctor's letter on being read aloud explained the mystery. Madame Sarrasin was at first completely dazzled. She embraced her son and daughter, with tears of joy; it seemed to her that the whole world was theirs, and that misfortune could never approach a family possessed of hundreds of millions of francs.

Women, however, can more readily than men adapt themselves to circumstances, and to sudden changes of fortune. Madame Sarrasin read her husband's letter again, felt that this great sum was his, that he would take all the responsibility of deciding what she and her children were to do, and speedily resumed her usual composure.

As to Jeannette, she was glad to see her mother and her brother so happy, but her childish imagination could picture no manner of life more delightful than that she led in her quiet home, occupied with her studies, and happy in the love of her parents. She could not see why a few bundles

of banknotes should make any such great change in her existence, and the prospect of it did not in the slightest degree discompose her.

Madame Sarrasin had married, at a very early age, a man entirely absorbed by the studious occupations of an ardent scholar and philosopher: she loved her husband, and respected his tastes, although she could not always comprehend them. Incapable of sharing the pleasure which Dr. Sarrasin derived from study, she had at times felt herself lonely by the side of the enthusiastic man of science, and consequently centered all her hopes and aspirations in her children. She pictured for them a brilliant and happy future.

Otto, she felt certain, was destined to do great things. From the time he took a place in the upper school she mentally regarded that modest and useful college for young engineers as the nursery of illustrious men. Her only trouble was that their limited means might possibly prove an obstacle, or at least a difficulty in the way of her son's brilliant career, and might ultimately also affect her daughter's establishment in life. But now, she so far understood the news conveyed in her husband's letter, as to perceive that these fears were needless, and her satisfaction was entire.

The mother and son spent most of the night in talking and making plans, while Jeannette, happy in the present, heedless of the future, was fast asleep in an arm-chair.

"You have not mentioned Max," said Madame Sarrasin to her son. "Have you not shown him your father's letter? What does he say about it?"

"Oh, you know what Max is!" answered Otto "He is worse than a philosopher, he is a stoic. I believe he fears the effect so enormous a fortune will have upon us! I say upon us, but he is not afraid for my father himself, whose good sense and judgment, he says, he can rely upon. But for you, mother, and Jeannette, and more especially for me, he plainly said he should have preferred an income of a few thousands a year."

"Perhaps Max is not far wrong," replied Madame Sarrasin, looking at her son. "The sudden possession of great wealth is fraught with danger to some natures."

Jeannette awoke, and heard her mother's last words.

"Do not you remember, mother," said she, as, rubbing her eyes, she rose and turned toward her little bedroom. "Do not you remember you told me one day that Max was always in the right. I for my part believe what our friend Max says." And, kissing her mother, Jeannette withdrew.

CHAPTER III

EFFECT OF AN ITEM OF NEWS

On entering the hall, where the fourth meeting of the Hygienic Conference was being held, Dr. Sarrasin was conscious that he was received with unusual tokens of respect. The Right Honorable Lord Glandover, the president and chairman of the assembly, had not hitherto condescended to appear conscious of the existence of the French doctor.

This nobleman was an august personage, whose part it was to declare the Conference open or closed, and, from a list placed before him, to call upon the various speakers who were to address the meeting. He habitually carried his right hand in the breast of his buttoned coat, not that it had received an injury and needed support, but only because it was usual among English sculptors to represent statesmen in this inconvenient attitude.

His pale smooth face, marked with red blotches, and surmounted by a wig of light hair, brushed high on a forehead which clearly belonged to an empty pate, possessed an aspect of ludicrous stiffness and foolish gravity. Lord Glandover might have been made of wood or pasteboard, so stiff and unnatural were all his movements. His very eyes appeared to turn beneath their brows by intermittent jerks, like those of a doll or puppet.

The notice hitherto bestowed on Dr. Sarrasin by Lord Glandover had amounted to no more than a slight and patronizing bow; it seemed to say—"Good morning, poor man; you are one of those who support your insignificant existence by making insignificant experiments with insignificant machines. How condescending I am to notice a being so far beneath me in the scale of creation! You may sit down, poor man, beneath the shadow of my nobility."

But on the present occasion Lord Glandover smiled most graciously upon Dr. Sarrasin as he entered, and even carried his courtesy so far as to invite him by a sign to be seated at his right hand. The other members of the Conference all rose when he appeared on the platform.

Considerably astonished by a reception so flattering, Dr. Sarrasin took the chair offered to him, concluding that, on further consideration, his invention had been found of much greater importance than his scientific brethren had at first supposed. But this illusion vanished when Lord Glandover, leaning toward him with a spinal contortion of his body, whispered in his ear: "I understand that you are a man of very considerable property. They tell me you are worth twenty-one million pounds sterling."

This was said almost in a tone of reproach, as though his lordship felt aggrieved at having lightly treated the equivalent in flesh and blood of a sum of money so vast. His look and tone seemed to say, "Why was I not made aware of this? It really is very unfair to expose one to the awkwardness of making such mistakes!"

Dr. Sarrasin, who could not in conscience have said he "was worth" a penny more than he had been at the last meeting, was wondering how the news should have already become known, when Dr. Ovidius of Berlin, who sat next him, said with a false and faint smile, "Why, Sarrasin, you are as great a man as any of the Rothschilds!—so the *Daily Telegraph* makes out. Let me congratulate you."

He handed the doctor a copy of the paper of Thursday. Among the items of news was to be seen the following paragraph, the composition of which plainly revealed its authorship.

"A Monster Heritage.—The legitimate heir to the fortune of the late Begum Gokool has at length been discovered, thanks to the indefatigable researches of Messrs. Billows, Green and Sharp, solicitors, 94 Southampton Row, London.

"The fortunate possessor of twenty-one million pounds sterling, now deposited in the Bank of England, is a Frenchman, Dr. Sarrasin, whose able paper, communicated at the Brighton Scientific Conference, was reported in this journal three days ago.

"By dint of a course of strenuous efforts, and amid dif-

ficulties and adventures forming in themselves a perfect romance, Mr. Sharp has succeeded in proving indisputably that Dr. Sarrasin is the sole living descendant of Jean Jacques Langévol, the second husband of the Begum Gokool.

"A few matters of form only required to be gone through in order to place Dr. Sarrasin in full possession of his fortune. A petition to that effect has been filed in Chancery.

"Very remarkable is the chain of circumstance by which the treasure accumulated by a long line of Indian Rajahs is laid at the feet of a French physician. The fickle goddess might have exhibited the indiscretion she so frequently displays in the disposal of her gifts; but on this occasion she has, we are glad to say, bestowed this prodigious fortune on one who will not fail to make a good use of his wealth."

Oddly enough, as many might think, Dr. Sarrasin was vexed to see his news made public. He not only foresaw the many annoyances it would entail upon him, he also felt humbled by the importance people seemed to attach to the event. He, himself personally, appeared to dwindle into insignificance before the imposing figures which denoted his capital. He was only conscious that his own personal merits, and all he had ever accomplished, were already, even in the eyes of those who knew him best, sunk in this ocean of gold and silver. His friends no longer saw in him the enthusiastic experimentalist, the ingenious inventor, the acute philosopher; they saw only the great millionaire.

Had he been a hump-backed dwarf, an ignorant Hottentot, the lowest specimen of humanity, instead of one of its most intelligent representatives, his value would have been the same as Lord Glandover had expressed it, he "was worth" henceforth just twenty-one million pounds, no more and no less.

This idea sickened him, and the crowd of members, staring with a searching if not a scientific curiosity to see how a millionaire looked, remarked with surprise that a shade of melancholy gathered on the countenance under examination. This, however, was only a passing weakness.

The magnitude of the object to which he had resolved to dedicate his unexpected fortune rose suddenly before him, and his serenity was restored.

He waited until Dr. Stevenson, of Glasgow, had finished reading a paper on the education of young idiots, and then

requested leave to make a communication. It was instantly granted by Lord Glandover, although the name of Dr. Ovidius stood next on the list. By the marked tone of his voice, he indicated that he would have done so had the whole Conference objected, or had all the learned men in Europe protested with one accord against such a piece of favoritism.

"Gentlemen," said Dr. Sarrasin, "it was my intention to wait for a few days before informing you of the singular chance which has befallen me, and of the happy consequences which may result to science from this event. But, the fact having become public, it would seem mere affectation were I now to delay speaking of it, and placing it in its proper light.

"Yes, gentlemen, it is true that a large sum of money, a sum amounting to many millions, now deposited in the Bank of England, appears to be legally my property.

"Need I tell you, that such being the case, I consider myself simply as a steward, intrusted with this wealth for the use and benefit of science? (Immense sensation.) This treasure belongs, not to me but to humanity—to progress! (Great commotion—exclamations—applause. The whole assembly, electrified by this announcement, rise *en masse*.)

"Do not applaud me, gentlemen; I know not one man of science worthy of the name who, in my place, would not do what it is my desire to do.

"It is possible that some may attribute to me motives of vanity and self-love in this matter, rather than of genuine devotedness. (No! No!) It matters little. Let us look to the results.

"I declare, then, definitively, and without reservation, that the twenty-one million pounds placed in my hands belongs not to me, but to science! Will you, gentlemen, undertake the management and distribution of it?

"I have not sufficient confidence in my own knowledge to undertake the sole disposal of such a sum. I appoint you as trustees; you yourselves shall decide on the best means of employing all the treasure." (Tumultuous applause—great excitement—general enthusiasm.)

The whole assembly stood up, some members, in the fever of excitement, mounted on the table. Professor Turnbull, of Glasgow, appeared on the verge of apoplexy. Dr.

Cicogna, of Naples, was ready to choke. Lord Glandover alone maintained the serene and dignified composure befitting his rank. He was perfectly convinced that Dr. Sarrasin intended the whole thing as a pleasant jest, without the smallest intention of actually carrying out so extravagant a scheme.

When quiet was in some measure restored, the speaker continued, "If I may be permitted to suggest what it would be easy to develop and bring to perfection, I would beg to propose the following plan."

The assembly, recovering its composure, listened with reverential attention. "Gentlemen, among the many causes of the sickness, misery and death which surround us, is one to which I think it reasonable to attach great importance; and that is the deplorable sanitary condition under which the greater part of mankind exists.

"Multitudes are massed together in towns, and in dwellings where they are often deprived of light and air, the two elements most necessary to life. These agglomerations of humanity become the hotbeds of fever and infection, and even those who escape death are tainted with disease; they are feeble and useless members of society, which thereby suffers great and serious loss, instead of deriving priceless advantage from their healthful and vigorous labor.

"Why, gentlemen, should we not, in an effort to remedy this sore evil, try the most powerful of all means of persuasion—that of example?

"Why should we not, by uniting the powers of our minds, produce the plan of a model city, based upon strictly scientific principles? (Cries of Hear, Hear.) Why should we not afterward devote our capital to the erection of such a city, and then present it to the world as a practical illustration of what all cities ought to be?" (Hear, Hear! and thunders of applause.)

The members, in transports of admiration, shook hands, and congratulated each other; then, surrounding Dr. Sarrasin, they seized upon his chair, raised him up, and bore him triumphantly round the hall.

"Gentlemen," continued the doctor, on being permitted to resume his place; "to this city, which every one of us can already picture in imagination, and which may shortly become a reality—to this city of health and happiness we

will call universal attention by descriptions, translated into all the languages of the earth; we will invite visitors from every nation; we will offer it as a home and refuge for honest families forced to emigrate from overpopulated countries.

"Those unfortunate people, also, who are driven into exile by foreign conquest—can you wonder, gentlemen, that I think of them—will find with us employment for their activity, and scope for their intelligence, while they will enrich our colony by their moral virtue and intellectual strength—possessions of far higher value than gold or precious stones.

"We will found great colleges where youth will be trained and educated in principles based on the truest wisdom, so as to develop and justly balance their moral, physical, and intellectual faculties, thus preparing future generations of strong and virtuous men."

No language can describe the tumult of enthusiasm which followed this communication. For at least a quarter of an hour the hall resounded with a storm of cheering and hurrahs.

Dr. Sarrasin sat down, and Lord Glandover, once more leaning toward him, murmured in his ear with a knowing wink, "Not a bad speculation that! what a revenue you would draw from the tolls—eh? The thing would be sure to succeed, provided it were well started and backed up by influential names. Why, all our convalescents and valetudinarians would be for settling there at once! Be sure you put down my name for a good building lot, doctor!"

Poor Dr. Sarrasin was quite mortified by this determination to attribute his actions to a covetous motive, and was about to reply to his lordship, when he heard the vice-president move a vote of thanks to the author of the philanthropic proposal just submitted to the assembly.

"It would," he said, "be to the eternal honor of the Brighton Conference, that an idea so sublime had been originated there. It was an idea which nothing short of the most exalted benevolence and the rarest generosity could have conceived. And yet, now that the idea had been suggested, it seemed almost a wonder that it had never before occurred to any one. Millions had been lavished on senseless wars, vast capitals squandered in foolish speculations;

how infinitely better spent they might have been in the furtherance of such a scheme as this!"

The speaker, in conclusion, proposed "That, in honor of its founder, the new city should receive the name of Sarrasina."

This motion would have been carried by acclamation, but Dr. Sarrasin interposed, "No," said he, "my name has nothing whatever to do with this scheme. Neither let us bestow on the future city a fancy name derived from Greek or Latin, such as is often invented, and gives an air of affectation and peculiarity to whatever bears it. It will be the city of welfare and comfort, let it be named after my country. Let us call it Frankville!"

Every one agreed to gratify Dr. Sarrasin in this by acceding to his choice, and the first step was thus taken toward the founding of the city.

The meeting then proceeded to the discussion of other points, and to this practical occupation, so unlike those to which it was usually devoted, we will leave it, while we follow the wandering fortunes of the paragraph published in the *Daily Telegraph*.

Copied word for word by all the newspapers, the information contained in this little paragraph was soon blazed abroad, over every county in England. In the *Hull Gazette* it figured at the top of the second page in a copy of that modest journal which, on the first of November, arrived at Rotterdam on board the three-masted collier *Queen Mary*.

The active scissors of the editor of the *Belgian Echo* pounced upon it at once, it was speedily translated into Flemish, and on the wings of steam it reached the *Bremen Chronicle* on the 2d of November. In that paper our bit of news next appeared, the same in substance, but clothed in a garb of German, the artful editor adding in parentheses "from our Brighton correspondent."

The anecdote, now thoroughly Germanized, reached the office of the editor of the *Northern Gazette,* and that great man gave it a place in the second column of his third page.

On the evening of the 3d of November, after passing through these various transformations, it made its entrance, between the fat hands of a stout serving man, into the study of Professor Schultz of the University of Jena.

High as this personage stood in the scale of humanity, he

presented nothing remarkable to the eye of a stranger. He was a man of five or six and forty, strongly built, his square shoulders denoting a robust constitution; his forehead was bald, the little hair remaining on his temples and behind his head suggested the idea that they consisted of threads of tow. His eyes were blue, that vague blue which never betrays a thought. Professor Schultz had a large mouth, garnished with a double row of formidable teeth which would never drop their prey; thin lips closed over them, whose principal employment was to keep note of the words which passed between them.

The general appearance of the professor was decidedly unpleasant to others, but he himself was evidently perfectly satisfied with it.

On hearing his servant enter, he raised his eyes to a very pretty clock over the mantelpiece which looked out of place among a number of vulgar articles around it, and said in a quick, rough voice, "6.55! The post comes in at 6.30. You bring my letters too late by twenty-five minutes. The next time they are not on my table at 6.30 you quit my service."

"Will you please to dine now, sir?" asked the man as he withdrew.

"It is now 6.55, and I dine at seven. You have been here for three weeks, and you know that. Recollect that I never change an hour, and never repeat an order." The professor laid his newspaper on the table, and went on writing a treatise which was to appear next day in *Physiological Records,* a periodical to which he contributed. We may be permitted to state that this treatise was entitled—*"Why are all Frenchmen affected by different degrees of hereditary degeneracy?"*

As the professor pursued his task, his dinner, consisting of a large dish of sausages and cabbage, flanked by a huge flagon of beer, was carefully placed on a round table near the fire. He laid aside his pen in order to partake of this repast, which he did with greater appearance of enjoyment than might have been expected from so grave an individual. Then he rang for coffee, lighted his pipe, and resumed his labors. It was after midnight when he signed his name on the last page, and retired at once to his bedroom to enjoy a well-earned repose.

Not till he was in bed did he take his paper from its cover and begin to read before going to sleep. Just as the professor was becoming drowsy, his eye was caught by a foreign name, that of "Langévol," in the paragraph relating to the "Monster Heritage." He tried to call to mind clearly the vague recollections to which this name gave rise. After a few minutes vainly devoted to efforts of memory, he threw away the journal, blew out his candle, and loud snores quickly gave notice that he slept.

By a physiological phenomenon, which he himself had studied and explained at great length, this name of Langévol followed Professor Schultz even in his dreams. The consequence was that on awaking next morning he found himself mechanically repeating it.

All at once, just as he was going to look at his watch, a sudden light broke upon him. Snatching up the newspaper at the foot of his bed, he read again and again, with his hand pressed on his forehead, the paragraph which he had all but missed seeing the night before. The light was evidently spreading to his brain, for without waiting to put on his flowered dressing-gown, he hurried to the fireplace, took a small miniature portrait from the wall by the mirror, and turning it around, passed his sleeve across the dusty pasteboard at the back.

The professor was right. Behind the picture he read the following German words, traced in faded ink:

"*Thérèse Schultz, eine geborene Langévol,*" which means, "Theresa Schultz, whose maiden name was Langévol."

That evening the professor was in the express train on his way to London.

CHAPTER IV

TWO CLAIMANTS

On the 6th November, at 7 A.M., Professor Schultz arrived at the Charing Cross Station. At noon he presented himself at No. 94 Southampton Row, entering a large room divided by a wooden barrier, one side being for the clerks, the other for the public. In it there were six chairs, a table, numberless green tin boxes, and a London Directory. Two young men, seated at the table, were quietly eating the

traditional luncheon of bread and cheese usual with their class.

"Messrs. Billows, Green and Sharp?" said the professor, in the tone of a man calling for his dinner.

"Mr. Sharp is in his private room—what name? On what business?"

"Professor Schultz, of Jena. On the Langévol business."

This information was murmured into the speaking-tube by the young clerk; a reply being returned into his ear which he did not choose to repeat, "Hang the Langévol business! Another fool come to put in a claim!"

Clerk's answer: "This man seems respectable enough. Does not look exactly agreeable, though."

Another mysterious whisper conveyed the words, "And he comes from Germany?"

"So he says."

With a sigh came the order, "Send him upstairs."

"Second story, door facing you," said the clerk aloud, pointing to an inner entrance. The professor plunged into the passage, mounted the stairs, and found himself opposite a green baize door, on which the name of Mr. Sharp stood out in black letters on a brass plate.

That personage was seated at a large mahogany writing-table, in a common looking room, with a felt carpet, leather chairs, and many open boxes. He half rose from his seat, and then, according to the polite fashion of business men, began to rummage among his papers for several minutes to show how busy he was. At last, turning to Professor Schultz, who remained standing near him, he said, "Have the goodness, sir, to tell me your business here in as few words as possible. My time is limited; I can give you but a very few minutes."

The professor smiled slightly, evidently not at all put out by the way he was received.

"Perhaps," he said, "when you know what brings me here, you will think it advisable to grant me a few minutes more."

"Proceed, sir."

"My business relates to the inheritance left by Jean Jacques Langévol, of Bar-le-Duc. I am the grandson of the elder sister, Theresa Langévol, who married in 1792 my grandfather, Martin Schultz, a surgeon in the army of

Brunswick; he died in 1814. I have in my possession three letters from my great-uncle, written to his sister, and many accounts of his return home after the battle of Jena besides the legal documents which prove my birth."

We need not follow Professor Schultz through the prolix explanations which he gave to Mr. Sharp. On this point he seemed, contrary to his nature, quite inexhaustible. His aim was to demonstrate to this Englishman, this Mr. Sharp, that by rights the German race should, in all things, predominate over all others. His object in putting forward a claim to this inheritance was chiefly that it might be snatched from French hands, which could not fail to make a silly use of it. What he hated in his rival was his nationality. Had he been a German he certainly should not have interfered, etc., etc.

But that a Frenchman—a would-be "savant"—should have this enormous wealth to spend upon French fancies, was distracting to his feelings, and he considered it his duty to contest his right to it at all costs.

At first sight, the connection between these political opinions and the opulent inheritance in question was not very clear. But the experienced eye of the man of business plainly detected the relation which patriotic ambition for the advantage of the German nation generally bore to the private interests of Professor Schultz individually. He saw that this apparently double aim had in reality but one motive.

There was no doubt about it. However humiliating it might be for a professor of the University of Jena to be connected with beings of an inferior race, it was evident that a French ancestress had had a share in the responsibility of giving to the world this matchless human being.

But this relationship being in a secondary degree to that of Dr. Sarrasin, would only give secondary rights to the said inheritance. The solicitor perceived, however, the possibility of lawfully sustaining them, and in this possibility he foresaw another which would be much to the advantage of Billows, Green and Sharp, something which would change the Langévol affair, already productive, into a very good thing, indeed, a second case of the "Jarndyce *versus* Jarndyce" of Dickens. An extensive horizon of stamped paper, deeds, documents of all sorts, rose before the eyes of the

man of law; and, what was worth more, he saw a compromise conducted by himself, Sharp, to the interest of both his clients, which would bring to himself equal parts of honor and profit.

In the meanwhile he made known to Professor Schultz the claims of Dr. Sarrasin, gave him proofs in corroboration, and insinuated that if Billows, Green and Sharp undertook to make something advantageous for the professor out of the claims, "shadowy though they are, my dear sir, it would, I fear, not hold water in a lawsuit," which his relationship to the doctor gave him—he hoped that the remarkable sense of justice, possessed by all Germans, would admit that to Messrs. Billows, Green and Sharp, he, the professor, owed a large debt of gratitude.

The latter was practical enough to understand the drift of this argument, and soon put the mind of the business man at rest on this point, though without committing himself in any way. Mr. Sharp politely begged permission to examine into the affair at his leisure, showed him out with marked respect, nothing more having been said as to the very limited time of which before he had been so sparing.

Professor Schultz retired convinced that he had no sufficient claim to put forward for the Begum's inheritance, but all the same persuaded that a struggle between the Saxon and Latin races, besides being always meritorious, would not fail, if set about properly, to turn to the advantage of the former.

The next important step was to get Dr. Sarrasin's opinion on the subject. A telegram despatched immediately to Brighton had the effect of bringing that gentleman to Mr. Sharp's office by five o'clock. Dr. Sarrasin heard all that had occurred with a calmness which astonished the solicitor. He frankly declared that he perfectly remembered a tradition in his family of a great-aunt brought up by a rich and titled lady, who had emigrated with her, and who had married in Germany. He knew neither the name nor the exact degree of relationship of this great-aunt.

Mr. Sharp was busily looking over his notes, carefully numbered in portfolios, which he now exhibited with considerable complacency to the doctor.

There was—Mr. Sharp did not seek to hide it—matter for a lawsuit, and lawsuits of this character may easily be

lengthened out. Indeed, it was not at all necessary to acknowledge to the adverse party that family tradition which Dr. Sarrasin had in his honesty just now confided to his solicitor. To be sure, there were those letters from Jean Jacques Langévol to his sister, of which Professor Schultz had spoken, and which were a point in his favor. A very small point indeed, destitute of any legal character, but still a point—no doubt other proofs would be exhumed from the dust of municipal archives. Perhaps even the adverse party, in default of authentic documents, would even dare to manufacture false ones. Everything must be foreseen. Who knew but that fresh investigations might assign to this Thérèse Langévol and her descendants, who had suddenly started up, superior claims to Dr. Sarrasin's? In any case, there would be long disputes, tedious examinations—no end of them. There was good hope of success for both sides, each could easily form a limited liability company to advance the cost of the proceedings and exhaust all the pleas of jurisdiction.

A celebrated suit of the same sort had been in the Court of Chancery for eighty-three consecutive years, and was only ended at last for want of funds—interest and capital, all had gone! What with inquiries, commissions, transfers, the proceedings would take an indefinite period! In ten years' time the question would probably be still undecided, and the twenty-one millions still sleeping quietly in the Bank.

Dr. Sarrasin listened to his long-winded oration, and wondered when it would come to an end. Without taking for gospel all that he heard, he felt a kind of chilly discouragement creeping over him, as a voyager gazes from the ship's bows at the port to which he believes himself approaching, but sees it growing less and less distinct, and finally disappearing as his vessel drifts away from the land. He told himself that it was not impossible that this fortune just now so near, and for which he had already found a use, would end by slipping from his grasp and fade away.

"Then what is to be done?" he asked of the solicitor.

"What is to be done?—Hem!—That was difficult to say, more difficult still to decide; but no doubt everything would be arranged in the end. He, Sharp, was certain of that. English law was excellent, a leetle slow perhaps—he

could not help saying so—yes, decidedly slow, *pede claudo* —hem!—hem!—but all the more sure. Assuredly Dr. Sarrasin could not fail in the course of a few years to be in possession of this inheritance, always supposing—hem!—hem!—his claims sufficient!"

The doctor issued from the office in Southampton Row very much shaken in his confidence, and convinced that he must either plunge into an interminable lawsuit or give up his dream. The thoughts that his fine philanthropic scheme must come to nothing gave him keen pain.

In the meantime, Mr. Sharp sent for Professor Schultz, who had left his address. He told him that Dr. Sarrasin had never heard of Thérèse Langévol, denied the existence of a German branch of the family, and rejected any idea of a compromise. There was nothing that the professor could do, therefore, if he believed his right well established, but to go to law. From this, Mr. Sharp, who was perfectly disinterested of course, and was a mere spectator in the matter, had no intention of dissuading him. What more could a solicitor wish than a lawsuit of perhaps thirty years, and not knowing to what it might lead them. He personally would be delighted. If he had not feared that Professor Schultz would think it suspicious on his part, he would have pushed his disinterestedness so far as to recommend to him one of his legal brethren, who would look after his interests. And, indeed, the choice was an important one! The path of law had now become a regular high road!—swarming with adventurers and robbers!—he owned this shameful fact, though with a blush!

"Supposing the French doctor was willing to arrange the matter, how much would it cost?" asked the professor.

Being a wise man, words could not confuse him—being a practical man, he went straight to the point without wasting any precious time on the way. Mr. Sharp was rather disconcerted by this mode of action. He represented to Professor Schultz that business did not go on so quickly as all that; that no one could see the end, when as yet they were just at the beginning; that in order to bring Dr. Sarrasin to terms they must protract the business, so as not to allow him to see that he, Schultz, was at all eager to compromise matters.

"I beg, sir," he concluded, "that you will leave it to

me; put yourself in my hands, and I will be answerable for everything."

"Very well," replied Schultz, "but I should much like to know what I have to expect." However, he could not ascertain from Mr. Sharp the price at which the solicitor valued Saxon gratitude, and was therefore obliged to give him *carte blanche* in the matter.

When Dr. Sarrasin appeared next day in answer to Mr. Sharp's summons, and quietly asked if he had any particular news for him, the solicitor, alarmed at his calmness, informed him that a serious examination had convinced him that the better plan would be to nip the threatened danger in the bud, and propose to compromise with this new claimant. Dr. Sarrasin must agree with him that this was essentially disinterested advice, and what few solicitors in Mr. Sharp's place would have given. But he felt quite a paternal interest in the affair, and his pride was concerned in bringing it to a speedy conclusion.

The doctor listened and thought all this sensible enough. During the last few days he had become so accustomed to the idea of immediately realizing his scientific dream that everything gave way to it. To wait ten years, or even one year, before he had it in his power, would have been a cruel trial to him. Without being taken in by Mr. Sharp's fine speeches, although little familiar with legal and financial questions, he would have cheerfully given up his claims for a sum paid down in ready money sufficient to enable him to pass at once from theory to practice. He also, therefore, at once gave *carte blanche* to Mr. Sharp, and departed.

The solicitor had now got what he wanted. The next day he wrote to the doctor that he believed Herr Schultz was not opposed to a compromise. In subsequent visits made by him to the doctor and professor, he told them alternately that the adverse party would say nothing decided, and that, in addition, a third candidate, attracted by the scent, was talked of.

This little game went on for a week. In the morning all was going well, but by the evening an unforeseen objection had suddenly arisen to upset everything. The honest doctor was incessantly troubled by doubts, fears, and changes of mind. Mr. Sharp could not bring himself to hook his fish, he so greatly feared that at the last he would struggle and snap the line. But so many precautions were, in this case,

quite superfluous. From the very first day Dr. Sarrasin, who would have done anything to spare himself the trouble of a lawsuit, was ready for any arrangement. When at last Mr. Sharp thought that the psychological moment, to use a celebrated expression, had arrived, or in less exalted language, that his client was done to a turn, he suddenly unmasked his batteries, and proposed an immediate compromise.

A benevolent man then appeared—the banker, Stilbing—who proposed to split the difference, to give to each ten millions, and merely have for commission the surplus million.

Dr. Sarrasin could have embraced Mr. Sharp when he made him this proposal; it seemed splendid to him. He was ready and eager to sign. He would have liked to put up in the market-place of the proposed city golden statues to the banker Stilbing, to the solicitor Sharp, to the bank and to all the lawyers in the United Kingdom.

The documents were drawn up, and everything was ready. Professor Schultz had surrendered—Mr. Sharp assuring him that, with a less easy-tempered adversary he would certainly have had all costs to pay. So it was settled. The two heirs each received a check for a hundred thousand pounds, payable at sight, and a promise of a definite settlement after all the legal formalities had been gone through. Thus was this wonderful affair settled, to the great glory of the Anglo-Saxon race!

We are assured that, that same evening, while dining at the Cobden Club with his friend Stilbing, Mr. Sharp drank a glass of champagne to the health of Dr. Sarrasin, another to Professor Schultz, and then, as he finished the bottle, gave way to this somewhat indiscreet exclamation, "Hurrah! Rule Britannia! We've got the best of it this time!"

The truth is, that the banker Stilbing considered his friend rather stupid for not having made a great deal more out of the business, and in his heart the professor had thought the same, from the moment in which he had felt himself obliged to agree to any arrangement that was offered. What could not have been done with a man like Dr. Sarrasin, a Celt, careless, thoughtless, and very certainly visionary!

The professor had heard of his rival's project of found-

ing a French town, under such moral and physical conditions as would develop the qualities of the race, and form strong and brave generations.

This enterprise appeared to him absurd, and, to his ideas, sure to fail, as it opposed the law of progress, which decreed the uprooting of the Latin race, its subjection to the Saxon, and eventually its disappearance from the surface of the globe. However, these results might be held in check if the doctor's programme began to be realized, and so much the more if there was any prospect of its success. It was, therefore, the duty of every true Saxon, in the interest of general order, to obey this appointed law, and bring to nothing, if he could, this insane enterprise. Under the circumstances it was quite clear that he, Schultz, M.D., *privat docent* of chemistry in Jena University, known by his numerous works on the different human races—works in which it was proved that the German race was to absorb all others—it was quite clear that he was particularly designed by the great creative and destructive force of nature to annihilate the pygmies who were struggling against it. From the very beginning it had been ordained that Thérèse Langévol would marry Martin Schultz, and that one day, the two nationalities meeting in the persons of the French doctor and the German professor, the latter would crush the former. Already he had in his possession half the doctor's fortune—this was the weapon he was to wield.

This project was but a secondary one to Professor Schultz at present; he merely added it to others still more vast which he had formed for the destruction of all nations who refused to blend themselves with the German people and be united with the Vaterland. However, wishing to explore to the end—if so be that they had an end—of Dr. Sarrasin's plans, he attended all the meetings of the congress. As several members, with Dr. Sarrasin himself among them, were leaving the meeting, the professor was overheard to make this declaration: that he would found at the same time as Frankville a city strong enough to put an end to that absurd and abnormal ant-hill.

"I hope," he added, "that the experiment we shall make will serve as an example to all the world!"

Although good Dr. Sarrasin was so full of love to all mankind, he had lived long enough to know that all his

fellow-creatures did not deserve the name of philanthropists. He noted, however, this speech of his adversary, thinking like a sensible man that no threat ought to be neglected. Some time afterward, writing to Max to invite him to aid in his enterprise, he mentioned this incident and described Herr Schultz so accurately that the young Alsacian was certain the doctor had in him a formidable adversary. The doctor added, " We shall need bold and energetic men, of practical information, not only to build, but to defend us."

Max answered, " Although I cannot immediately give my coöperation to the founding of your city, you may depend on finding me when the right time comes. I shall not lose sight for a single day of this Professor Schultz, whom you have described so well. My Alsacian birth gives me the right to know about his affairs. Whether I am near you or far away, I am devoted to you. If by any unforeseen chance you should be some months, or even years, without hearing from me, do not be uneasy. Whether I am near you or far away, I shall have but one thought, to work for you, and consequently to serve France."

CHAPTER V

STEELTOWN

We must take a leap through time and space. Five years have elapsed since the two heirs took possession of the Begum's inheritance. The scene lies in the United States, to the north of Oregon, ten leagues from the shores of the Pacific. The district is mountainous, its northern limits as yet barely defined by the two neighboring powers. A merely superficial spectator might call it the American Switzerland, with its abrupt peaks rising above the clouds, its deep valleys dividing the heights, its aspect at once grand and wild.

But, unlike the European Switzerland, it is not given up to the peaceful industries of the shepherd, the guide, and the hotel-keeper. It has Alpine decorations only, just a crust of rocks, and earth and venerable pines spread over a mass of iron and coal.

Should the traveller through these solitudes stay on his way to listen awhile to the voice of nature, he would not,

as on the slopes of the Oberland, hear the gentle murmurs of insect life, or the herd-boy's call, enhancing the silence of the mountain. On his ear in this wild spot would fall the heavy sound of the steam hammer, and under his feet would echo the muffled explosions of powder.

Dreary roads, black with cinders and coke, wind round the sides of the mountains. Heaps of variegated scoria, which the scanty herbage fails to cover, glance and glare like the eyes of a basilisk. Here and there yawns the shaft of a deserted mine, a dark gulf, the mouth grown over with briers. The air is heavy with smoke, and hangs like a pall over the ground. Not a bird nor an insect is to be found.

In five years there has sprung up on this bare and rocky plain eighteen villages, composed of small wooden houses, all alike, brought ready built from Chicago, and containing a large population of rough workmen.

In the midst of these villages, at the very foot of the Coal Buttes, as the inexhaustible mountains of coal are called, rises a dark mass, huge and strange, an agglomeration of regular buildings, pierced with symmetrical windows, covered with red roofs, and surmounted by a forest of cylindrical chimneys, which continually vomit forth clouds of dense smoke. Through the black curtain which veils the sky, dart red lightning-like flames, while a distant roaring is heard resembling that of thunder or the beating of the surf on a rocky shore.

This erection is Stahlstadt—Steeltown! The German city, and the personal property of Professor Schultz, the ex-chemistry professor of Jena, who has become, by means of the Begum's millions, the greatest iron-worker, and especially the greatest cannon-founder, of the two hemispheres.

He casts guns of all shapes and of all calibres, smooth and rifled bores, for Russia, Turkey, Roumania, Japan, for Italy and for China, but particularly for Germany.

With the aid of his enormous capital, this large establishment, which is at the same time a regular town, started up as at the wave of a conjurer's wand. Thirty thousand workmen, Germans for the most part, crowded to it, and settled themselves in the suburbs. In a few months its products, owing to their overwhelming superiority, acquired universal celebrity.

Professor Schultz digs out iron and coal from his own

mines, which lie ready to his hand, changes them into steel, and again into cannon, all on the spot.

What none of his competitors can do he manages. In France ingots of steel are obtained, eighty thousand pounds in weight. In England a hundred-ton gun has been cast. At Essen, M. Krupp has contrived to cast blocks of steel of five hundred tons! Herr Schultz does not stop at that—he knows no limits. Order a cannon of him, of whatever weight and power you like, he'll turn you out that cannon, as bright as a new halfpenny, exactly at the time agreed on.

But he makes his customers pay for it! It is as if the two hundred and fifty millions of 1871 had only given him an appetite for more!

In gun-casting, as in everything else, the man who can do what others cannot is sure to be well off. Indeed, Schultz's cannon not only attain to an unprecedented size, but, although they may deteriorate slightly by use, they never burst. Steeltown steel seems to have special properties. There are many stories current of mysterious chemical mixtures; but one thing is certain, that no one has discovered the invaluable secret.

Another thing certain is that, in Steeltown that secret is guarded with the most jealous care. In this remote corner of North America, surrounded by deserts, isolated from the world by a rampart of mountains, five hundred miles from the nearest town or habitation of any sort, we may search in vain for the smallest vestige of that liberty which is the foundation principle of the United States.

On arriving under the walls of Steeltown it is useless to try and enter one of the massive gateways which here and there break the line of moats and fortifications. The sternest of sentinels will repulse the traveller. He must go back to the suburbs. He cannot enter the city of steel unless he possesses the magic formula, the password, or, at any rate, an order, duly stamped, signed, and countersigned.

One November morning a young workman arrived at Steeltown, who doubtlessly possessed such an order, for after leaving his well-worn portmanteau at an inn, he directed his steps to the gateway nearest the village.

He was a fine, strongly built young fellow, dressed in a loose coat, woolen shirt, with no collar, and trousers of ribbed velveteen, tucked into big boots. He pulled his wide

felt hat over his eyes, as if to conceal the coal dust with which his skin was begrimed, and walked forward with elastic step, whistling through his brown mustache.

Arrived at the gateway, the young man, showing a printed paper to the officer of the gate, was immediately admitted.

"Your order is addressed to the foreman, Seligmann, section K, road ix, workshop 743," said the sentinel. "You must follow the roundway to your right till you come to the K boundary, and there show yourself to the porter. Do you know the rule? Expelled, if you enter another section than your own," he added as the newcomer went away.

The young workman followed the direction indicated to him along the roadway. On his right lay a moat, above which marched numerous sentinels. On his left, between the wide circular road, and the mass of buildings, lay first a double line of railway, and then a second wall, similar to the outer one, which entirely surrounded the steel city.

It was of so great an extent that the sections, enclosed by the fortified walls like the spokes of a wheel, were perfectly independent of each other, although surrounded by the same wall and moat.

The young workman soon reached the boundary K, placed at the side of the road, before a lofty gateway surmounted by the same letter sculptured in the stone, and presented himself to the porter.

This time, instead of having a soldier to deal with, he found himself before a pensioner, with a wooden leg, and medals on his breast. The pensioner examined the paper, stamped it again, and said, "All right, ninth road on the left."

The young man entered this second intrenched line, and at last found himself in section K. The road which debouched from the gate was the axle, and at right-angles on either side extended rows of uniform buildings. The noise of machinery was almost deafening. Those gray buildings pierced with thousands of windows were like living monsters. But the newcomer was apparently accustomed to such scenes, for he bestowed not the slightest attention on the curious sight.

In five minutes he had found road ix, workshop 743, and having entered a little office full of portfolios and

registers, stood in the presence of the foreman Seligmann.

The man took the paper with all its stamps, examined it, then looked the young workman over. "Hired as puddler, are you?" he asked; "you seem very young?"

"Age has nothing to do with it," was the answer. "I shall soon be six-and-twenty, and I've been puddling for the last seven months. If you like, I can show you certificates on the strength of which I was engaged at New York by the head overseer."

The young man spoke German quite easily, but with a slight accent which seemed to arouse the suspicions of the foreman. "Are you an Alsacian?" he demanded.

"No, I am Swiss—from Schaffhausen. "Look, here are all my papers, quite correct," he added, taking out a leather pocketbook and showing a passport, testimonial, and certificates.

"Very good. After all, you are hired, and it's my business simply to show you your place," returned Seligmann, assured by this display of official documents.

He then inscribed in a register the name of Johann Schwartz, copying it from the order, and gave to the workman a blue card bearing his name and the number 57,938, adding—

"You must be at the K gate every morning at seven o'clock; show this card, which will already have passed you through the outer wall. Take from the rack in the lodge a counter with your number on it and show it to me when you come in. At seven in the evening, as you go out, drop the counter into a box placed at the door of the workshop, and only open at that time."

"I know the system. Can I live in the town?" asked Schwartz.

"No; you must find a lodging outside, but you can get your meals at the canteen in the shed at a very moderate price. Your wages are a dollar a day to begin with, but they will be raised quarterly. Expulsion is the only punishment. It is pronounced by me at first, and by the engineer on appeal, for any infraction of the rules. Will you begin to-day?"

"Why not?"

"It will be but half a day," observed the foreman, as he guided Schwartz to an inner gallery.

The two men walked along a wide passage, crossed a yard and entered a vast hall, like the platform of an immense terminus. Schwartz, as he glanced round, could not restrain a movement of professional admiration. On each side of the long hall were two rows of enormous columns, as big as those in St. Peter's, at Rome, their tops rising through the glass roof. These were the chimneys of the puddling furnaces, and there were fifty of them in a row. At one end engines were continually bringing up wagon loads of iron to feed the furnaces; at the other, empty trucks appeared to receive and carry away the metal, transformed by " puddling " into steel.

There was incessant movement in this monster forge. To a spectator it was a terrifying scene, the cascades of molten metal, dull blows heard above the roaring, showers of brilliant sparks, the glare of the red hot furnaces. In the fearful din and tumult, man appeared like a helpless infant.

Powerful fellows must these puddlers be. To stir and knead four hundredweight of metallic paste in that temperature, to see nothing for hours but the blinding glare of the furnace and molten iron, is trying work, and wears a man out in ten years.

Schwartz, as if to show the foreman what he could do, at once stripped off his coat and woolen shirt, exhibiting a well-knit frame, and arms on which the muscles stood out like cords, seized a hook which one of the puddlers had just put down, and set to work. Seeing that he was likely to do well, the foreman soon left, and returned to his office.

The newcomer worked on until the dinner hour. But he was either too energetic, or he had neglected to take sufficient food that morning to support his strength in this unusual toil, for he soon appeared tired and faint. Indeed so worn out did he seem that the chief of his gang noticed it.

" You're not fit for a puddler, my lad," he said, " and you had best ask at once to be changed into another section, for they won't do it later."

Schwartz protested against this. It was but a passing faintness. He could puddle as well as any one!

The gang's-man made his report however, and Schwartz was immediately called up before the chief engineer. This personage examined his papers, shook his head, and asked in an inquisitorial tone, " Were you a puddler at Brooklyn?"

The young man looked down in confusion. "I must confess it, I see," he answered. "I was employed in casting, and it was in the hope of increasing my salary that I wished to try my hand at puddling."

"You are all alike," returned the engineer, shrugging his shoulders. "At five-and-twenty you think you can do what few men of five-and-thirty are fit for. Well, then, are you good at casting?"

"I was two months in the first class."

"You had better have stayed in it! Here you will have to begin in the third. All the same, you may think yourself lucky in being allowed to change your section so easily!"

The engineer then wrote a few words on a pass, sent a telegram, and said, "Give up your counter, leave this division, and go straight to section O, chief engineer's office. He has been told."

The same formalities were gone through again that Schwartz had met with at the K gate. As in the morning, he was questioned, accepted, and sent to the foreman of the workshop, who introduced him into the casting-hall. But here the work was more silent, and more methodical.

"This is only a small gallery, for casting forty-two pounders," observed the foreman; "first-class workmen alone are allowed to cast the big guns."

The sight appeared familiar to Schwartz, who was soon coupled with a man of his own height, tested in a small cast, and found a capital workman. Indeed, the head of his gang at the close of the day promised him a speedy rise.

On leaving section O, at seven that evening, he went back to the inn to fetch his portmanteau. Then, following one of the exterior roads, he soon came to a group of houses, which he had remarked that morning as he passed, and easily found a lodging in the cottage of a good woman who "took in a lodger."

After supper, our young workman did not, like too many of his class, stroll out to the nearest public-house. He shut himself in his room, took from his pocket a fragment of steel evidently picked up in the puddling shed, a little crucible earth from the O section, and examined them carefully by the light of a smoky lamp. Then, taking from his portmanteau a thick manuscript book, half full of notes, receipts, and calculations, he wrote the following in good

French, though, for precaution, in a cipher of which he alone knew the key:

"November 10th.—Steeltown.—There is nothing particular in the mode of puddling, unless, of course, it is the choice of two different temperatures, relatively low for the first heat and the reheating, according to Chernoff's rules. 'As to the casting, it is done after Krupp's process, but with a perfectly admirable uniformity of movement. This precision in maneuvers is the great German power. It results from the innate musical talent in the German race. The English could never attain to this perfection; they have no ear, and want discipline. The French may reach it easily, as they are the most perfect dancers in the world. So far, there appears to be nothing mysterious in the remarkable success of this manufacture. The mineral specimens which I picked up on the mountain are similar to our best iron.

"The coal is certainly uncommonly fine, of an eminently metallurgic quality, but still there is nothing unusual in it.

"There is no doubt that in the Schwartz manufacture special care is taken to purify the principal materials from any foreign matter, that they may be employed only in a perfectly pure state. The result may easily be imagined. To be in possession of the remainder of the problem, I have only to determine the composition of the refractory earth of which the crucibles and the channels are made. This discovered, and our gangs of workmen properly drilled, I do not see why we should not do what they do here. 'All the same, as yet I have only seen two sections, and there are at least four-and-twenty, without counting the central building, the plans and models department, the secret cabinet! What dangerous schemes may not be maturing in that den? What may not our friends have to fear, after the threat uttered by Herr Schultz when he took possession of his fortune?"

After these questions, Schwartz, who was tired enough with his day's work, undressed, laid himself down in a little bed, which was about as uncomfortable as a German bed could be—and that is saying a good deal—lighted his pipe, and began to smoke, and read a well-worn book. But his thoughts were apparently elsewhere. The odorous clouds issued from his lips as if they were saying, "Pooh! Pooh! Pooh! Pooh!"

He soon put down his book, and remained lost in thought for a long time, as if he were absorbed in the solution of a difficult problem. "Ah," he exclaimed at last, "though the devil himself should try to prevent me I will find out the secret of Professor Schultz, and, above all, what he is meditating against Frankville!"

Schwartz went to sleep, murmuring the name of Dr. Sarrasin; but in his dreams it was the name of Jeannette, sweet little Jeannette, that was on his lips. He had never forgotten the little girl, although Jeannette, since he last saw her, had grown into a young lady. This phenomenon is easily explained by the ordinary laws of the association of ideas. Thoughts of the doctor brought up that of his daughter—association by contiguity. Then, when Schwartz —or rather Max Bruckmann—awoke, having still Jeannette in his mind, he was not at all astonished, but found in this fact a fresh proof of the excellence of the psychological principles of John Stuart Mill.

CHAPTER VI

THE ALBRECHT PIT

Frau Bauer, Max Bruckmann's good landlady, was a Swiss by birth, and widow of a miner, who was killed four years previously in one of those accidents which make a miner's life so precarious. She was allowed a small annual pension of thirty dollars, and, in addition, the wages of her boy Carl, brought regularly to her every Sunday. She was enabled slightly to increase her income by letting a furnished room.

Although scarcely thirteen, Carl was employed in the coal mine as a trapper; it being his duty to open and shut one of the ventilator doors, whenever it was necessary for the coal trucks to pass. His mother had her house on lease; and as it was too far from the Albrecht pit for him to come home every evening, he had obtained some night work at the bottom of the same mine. It was not heavy, being merely to look after six horses, while the man who had charge of them during the day spent the night above ground.

Carl's young life was passed, therefore, almost entirely, fifteen hundred feet below the surface of the earth. All

day he kept watch by his door, all night he slept on a bed of straw, near his horses. On Sunday mornings only, did he return to the light of day, to revel for a few short hours in the universal blessing of the sun, the blue sky, and his mother's smile.

As may be imagined, after such a week, on coming up from the pit he was hardly what would be called presentable. Indeed he was more like a young gnome, a sweep, or a negro, than anything else. Frau Bauer had always a large supply of hot water and soap ready, and devoted a good hour, the first thing, to scrubbing him. She next dressed him in a comfortable suit of dark green cloth, made from an old one of his father's, and kept all the week in the big deal cupboard, and then set to work to admire her boy, an occupation of which she never tired, for she thought him the handsomest in the world.

When the layer of coal-dust was washed off, Carl was really as good-looking as most boys. His golden silky locks, his pleasant blue eyes, well suited his fair complexion, but he was altogether too small for his age. His sunless life made him as white as a turnip and, had Dr. Sarrasin's compte-globules been applied to the blood of the young miner, it would probably have revealed that he possessed a very insufficient quantity.

In character he was rather silent and quiet, with some of that pride which the feeling of constant danger, the habit of regular work, and the satisfaction of difficulties overcome, gives to all miners. His greatest happiness was to sit near his mother at the square table in their little kitchen, and arrange in a box a large number of frightful insects brought from the bowels of the earth. The warm and equal atmosphere of the mines has its special fauna, little known by naturalists, just as the damp walls of the pits have their flora of curious mosses, mushrooms, and lichens.

The engineer, Maulesmülhe, who was fond of entomology, had remarked this, and had promised a small reward for each new specimen that Carl brought him. This, which had at first led the boy to explore all the recesses of the mine, had gradually taught him to be a collector. He now sought for insects on his own account. However, he did not limit his affection to spiders and wood-lice. He was on intimate terms with two bats and a big rat. If he was

to be believed, these three animals were the most intelligent and amiable creatures in the world; even more intellectual than the horses with long silky manes and shining sides, of which Carl always spoke in terms of warm admiration.

Blair-Athol was chief favorite, the eldest in the stable, a philosophical old horse, who had been for six years fifteen hundred feet below the level of the sea, and had all that time never seen the light of day. He was now nearly blind.

But how well he knew his way along the subterranean labyrinth, when to turn to the right or when to the left, as he drew his trucks, without ever missing a step! He always stopped at the right time before the trap, leaving just room enough to open it. In what a friendly way did he neigh, morning and evening, at the exact minute when it was time for his provender to be brought him. How good, how obedient, how gentle, he was!

"I declare, mother, he really gives me a kiss, by rubbing his cheek against mine, when I put my head near him," said Carl. "And he is wonderfully useful besides, mind you, for he is just like a clock; without him we should never know whether it was night or day, morning or evening."

So chattered the boy, and dame Bauer listened to him with delight. She, too, loved Blair-Athol as much as her son did, and never failed to send him a lump of sugar. She would have given anything to go and see the old servant her husband had known, and at the same time visit the dismal place where poor Bauer's body—black as ink, carbonized by the fire-damp—had been found after the explosion. But women are not admitted into the mines, and she had to be satisfied with the vivid descriptions given by her son.

"Mother, what do you think Mr. Maulesmülhe, the engineer, said to me yesterday? He said that if I gave correct answers to some questions in arithmetic which he would put to me one of these days, he would take me to hold the land-chain when he surveys the mine with his compass. It seems they are going to pierce a new gallery, to join the Weber shaft, and he will find it uncommonly difficult to bring it out in the right place!"

"Really!" cried dame Bauer with delight; "did Mr. Maulesmülhe say that!" And already she imagined her Carl holding the chain along the gallery, while the en-

gineer, notebook in hand, set down figures, and, his eyes fixed on the compass, ordered the direction of the opening.

"Unluckily," continued Carl, "I have nobody to explain what I don't understand in my arithmetic, and I'm much afraid I shall not answer correctly!"

At this point, Max, who was silently smoking by the fireside, which place, as a lodger in the house, he had the privilege of occupying, joined in the conversation, and said to the boy, "If you like to show me what you find difficult, perhaps I can give you a helping hand."

"You?" said dame Bauer with some incredulity.

"Certainly," replied Max. "Do you think I learn nothing at the evening class to which I go regularly after supper? The master is very pleased with me, and says he will make me a monitor."

This settled, Max brought from his room a clean paper copy-book, and seating himself by the lad, explained the difficult sum, with so much clearness that the astonished Carl managed it easily. From that day dame Bauer showed more consideration for her lodger, and Max took a great liking to his little companion.

In the factory, Max showed himself an exemplary workman, and was not long in being promoted to the second, and then to the first class. Every morning he was at the O gate punctually at seven o'clock. Every evening, after his supper, he repaired to the class taught by the engineer, Trubner. Geometry, algebra, drawing of diagrams and machines—he attacked them all with equal ardor; and his progress was so rapid that his master was much struck by it. Two months from his entry into the Schultz manufactory, the young workman was already noted as one of the cleverest intellects, not only in the O section, but in all Steeltown. A report of his engineer, sent up at the end of the quarter, bore this formal mention: "Schwartz (Johann) twenty-six, working caster of the first class. I wish to bring this man before the notice of the directors, as quite above the average, in three respects, theoretical knowledge, practical skill, and remarkable genius for invention."

But something more than this was required to draw the attention of the chiefs to Max. It was not long in coming; though unfortunately it was under the most tragical circumstances.

One Sunday morning, Max, much astonished at hearing ten o'clock strike without his young friend Carl having appeared, went down to ask dame Bauer if she knew any reason for this delay. He found her very uneasy; Carl ought to have been at home two hours and more. Seeing her anxiety, Max offered to go and look after him.

About eleven o'clock, he reached the head of the Albrecht shaft. It was not noisy, and animated, as on a week day; there was only one young "milliner," as the miners jokingly call the sorters of the coal—chatting with the watchman, whose duty kept him, even on this day, at the pit's mouth. "Have you seen little Carl Bauer, number 41,902, come up this morning?" asked Max of this functionary.

The man consulted his list, and shook his head.

"Is there any other outlet to the mine?"

"No, this is the only one; the new shaft to the north is not yet finished."

"Then, is the boy below?"

"He must be, though it's an odd thing, too, for on Sundays only the five watchmen should be left."

"Can I go down to find out?"

"Not without permission."

"There may have been an accident," put in the milliner.

"Not possible on Sunday."

"All the same," said Max, "I must find out what has become of that boy."

"You must speak to the overseer of machinery, in his office, if he is still there."

The overseer, dressed in his Sunday best, with a shirt collar as stiff as if it had been of tin, was fortunately still at his accounts. He was an intelligent and humane man, and at once entered into Max's anxiety. "We will go immediately and see what he is doing."

And ordering the man on duty to be ready to pay away the cable, he prepared to descend into the mine with the young workman. "Have you not the Galibert apparatus?" asked Max. "It may be useful."

"You are right. One can never be sure what has occurred at the bottom of the pit." Saying this, the overseer took from a cupboard two zinc reservoirs, similar to the urns which the street cocoa-sellers in Paris carry on their backs. These were boxes of compressed air, placed

in communication with the lips by means of two India-rubber tubes, the horn mouthpiece being held between the teeth. They are filled with the aid of peculiar bellows, constructed to empty themselves completely. The nose being held in wooden pincers, a man may, thus supplied with a store of air, penetrate into the most unbreathable atmosphere.

These preparations completed, the overseer and Max took their places in the basket, the cable moved, and the descent began. Two small electric lamps shed some degree of light around, and the men conversed together as they were lowered into the depths of the earth.

"For a man not in the business you are a cool hand," remarked the overseer. "I've seen people who couldn't summon up courage enough to go down; or if they did, they crouched like rabbits at the bottom of the basket all the time."

"Really," answered Max, "it seems nothing to me; though it's true I have been down a coal mine two or three times before."

They were soon landed at the foot of the shaft. The watchman whom they found there had seen nothing of young Carl. They first visited the stable; the horses were there alone, and appeared quite tired of their own company. At least such was the conclusion to be drawn from the neigh with which Blair-Athol greeted the approach of the three human figures. On a nail hung Carl's knapsack, and in a corner, beside a currycomb, lay his arithmetic book. Max remarked directly that his lantern was not there, a fresh proof that the boy must be still in the mine.

"He may have been hurt by a landslip," said the overseer, "but it is scarcely probable. What can he have been doing in the galleries on a Sunday?"

"Oh! perhaps he went to hunt for some insects before going up," said the watchman. "It is a passion with him."

The stableboy, who arrived in the midst of this discussion, confirmed this supposition. He had seen Carl start at seven o'clock with his lantern.

A regular search was immediately commenced. The other watchmen were called, and each one, with his lantern, told off in a different direction, pointed out to him on a large plan of the mine, that every tunnel and gallery might be thoroughly examined.

In two hours the whole mine had been gone through, and the seven men met again at the foot of the shaft. There had not been the least appearance of a landslip found anywhere, nor the least trace of Carl. The overseer, perhaps influenced by an increasing appetite, inclined to the opinion that the boy had passed out unperceived, and would by this time be at his home. But Max, convinced of the contrary, insisted on renewed exertions.

"What is that?" he asked, pointing to a dotted region on the plan, resembling in the midst of the adjacent minuteness those terræ incognitæ marked on the confines of the arctic continents.

"That is the zone provisionally deserted, because of the thinning of the bed," replied the overseer.

"Is there a deserted zone? We must look there!" exclaimed Max, with a decision to which the other men submitted.

They were not long in reaching the entrance to some galleries which, to judge by the slimy and moldy walls, might have been deserted for many years. They had proceeded for some time without coming upon anything suspicious, when Max stopped, and said: "Do you not feel stupefied, and attacked with headache?"

"Why, yes, indeed we do!" answered his companions.

"So do I," resumed Max; "for a moment I felt quite giddy. There is certainly carbonic acid gas about! Will you allow me to light a match?" he asked of the overseer.

"By all means, my lad, strike away."

Max took his little box from his pocket, struck a match, and stooping, held it toward the ground, upon which it instantly went out.

"I was sure of it," he remarked. "The gas, being more heavy than the air, lies close to the ground. You must not stay here—I mean those who have not the Galibert apparatus. If you like, sir, we can continue the search alone."

This being agreed to, Max and the overseer each took between his teeth the mouthpiece of his air box, placed the nippers on his nostrils, and boldly penetrated into a succession of old galleries. In a quarter of an hour they came out to renew the air in their reservoirs; this done, they started again. On the third trial their efforts were crowned with success. The faint bluish light of an electric lamp

was seen far off in the darkness. They hastened to it.

At the foot of the damp wall, motionless and already cold, lay poor little Carl. His blue lips and sunken eyes told what had happened.

He had evidently wished to pick up something from the ground, had stooped, and been literally drowned in the carbonic acid gas.

Every effort to recall him to life was in vain. He must have been already dead four or five hours. By the next evening there was another little grave in the cemetery of Steeltown, and poor dame Bauer was bereaved of her child as well as of her husband.

CHAPTER VII

THE CENTRAL BLOCK

A REPORT from Dr. Echternach, surgeon-in-chief to the section of the Albrecht pit, stated that the death of Carl Bauer, number 41,902, thirteen years of age, trapper in gallery 228, was caused by asphyxia, resulting from the absorption by the respiratory organs of a large proportion of carbonic acid.

Another no less luminous report from the engineer Maulesmülhe, explained the necessity of including in the ventilating scheme zone B in the plan xiv., as a large amount of deleterious gas filtered slowly from its galleries. Lastly, a note from the same functionary brought before the notice of the authorities the devotedness of the overseer Rayer, and of the first-class workman, Johann Schwartz.

Ten hours later, on reaching the porter's lodge, Max, as he took his presence-counter, found this printed order on the nail, addressed to him: "Schwartz will present himself at the Director-General's office at ten o'clock to-day. Central block, Gate and Road A."

"At last!" thought Max. "This is the first step; the rest will come!"

While chatting with his comrades on his Sunday walks round Steeltown, he had acquired sufficient knowledge of the general organization of the city to know that authority to enter the central block was not to be had every day. All sorts of stories were current about this place. It was said that some indiscreet people, who had tried to get into

the guarded enclosure by stratagem, had never been seen again. That before their admission, all workmen employed there had to go through a series of masonic ceremonies—were obliged to take the most solemn oaths not to reveal anything that went on there, and were mercilessly sentenced to death by a secret tribunal if they violated their oath. A subterranean railway put this sanctuary in communication with the outworks. Night trains brought unknown visitors. Supreme councils were held there, and sometimes mysterious personages came to participate in the deliberations.

Without putting unnecessary faith in these accounts, Max knew that they were really the popular expression of a well-known fact—the extreme difficulty which attended admission into the central division. Of all the workmen whom he knew—and he had friends in the iron mines as well as in the coal pits, among the refiners as well as the men at the blast furnaces, among the carpenters as well as the the smiths—not one had ever entered the gate.

It was therefore with a feeling of intense curiosity as well as secret pleasure that he presented himself there at the hour named. It was soon plain that the precautions were of the strictest.

Evidently Max was expected. Two men, dressed in a gray uniform, swords at their sides, and revolvers in their belts, were waiting in the porter's lodge. This lodge, like that of a cloistered convent, had two gates, an outer and an inner one, which were never open at the same time.

The pass examined and signed, Max saw, though without manifesting any surprise, a white handkerchief brought out, with which the two attendants in uniform carefully bandaged his eyes. Then taking him by the arms, they marched him off without saying a word. After walking two or three thousand steps they mounted a staircase, a door was opened and shut, and Max was allowed to take off his bandage.

He found himself in a large plain room, furnished with some chairs, a black board, and a long desk, supplied with every implement necessary for linear drawing. It was lighted by high windows, filled with ground glass.

Almost immediately, two personages, who looked as if they belonged to a university, entered the room. "You are brought before our notice as having somewhat dis-

tinguished yourself," said one of them. "We are about to examine you to find out if there is reason to admit you into the model division. Are you prepared to answer our questions?"

Max modestly declared himself ready to be put to the proof. The two examiners then successively put questions to him in chemistry, geometry, and algebra. The young workman satisfied them in every case by the clearness and precision of his answers. The figures which he traced in chalk on the board were neat, decided, and elegant. His equations in the most perfect way, in equal lines, like the ranks of a crack regiment. One of these demonstrations was so remarkable, and so new to the judges, that they expressed their astonishment, and asked where he had been taught.

"At Schaffhäusen, my native town, in the elementary school."

"You appear a good draughtsman?"

"It was my strong point."

"The education given in Switzerland is decidedly very uncommon," remarked one examiner to the other. "We will give you two hours to execute this," he resumed, handing to the candidate a drawing of a very complicated-looking steam engine. "If you acquit yourself well you shall be admitted with the mention, 'Perfectly satisfactory and very superior.'"

Left alone, Max set eagerly to work. When his judges reëntered at the expiration of the given time, they were so delighted with his diagram, that they added to the promised mention, "We have not another draughtsman of equal talent."

Our young workman was then again seized by the gray attendants, and with the same ceremonial, that is to say, the bandaged eyes, was led to the office of the Director-General. "You are offered admission to one of the studios in the model division," said this personage. "Are you ready to submit to the rules and regulations?"

"I do not know what they are," said Max; "but I presume they are acceptable."

"They are these: First, you are compelled, as long as your engagement lasts, to reside in the same division. You cannot go out but by special and exceptional order. Sec-

ond, you are subject to military discipline; and you owe absolute obedience, under military penalties, to your superiors. To weigh against this, you are also like the non-commissioned officers of an active army, for you may, by a regular advance, be raised to the highest grades. Third, you bind yourself by an oath never to reveal to any one what you see in the division to which you have access. Fourth, your correspondence is opened by your chiefs, all you send as well as all you receive; and it must be limited to your family."

"In short, I am in prison," thought Max. Then, he replied quietly, "These rules seem perfectly just, and I am ready to submit to them."

"Good. Raise your hand. Take the oath. You are nominated draughtsman to the fourth studio. A lodging will be assigned to you, and for your meals, you will find a first-rate canteen here. You have not your property with you?"

"No, sir. As I was ignorant of what I was wanted for, I left everything in my room."

"They will be brought to you, for you must not again go out of the division."

"I did well," thought Max, "to write my notes in cipher! They would only have had to look at them!"

Before the close of the day, Max was established in a pretty little room, in the fourth story of a building overlooking a wide courtyard, and had some ideas about his new life. He did not fancy that it would be as dismal as at first sight it appeared. His comrades, with whom he made acquaintance at the restaurant, were in general quiet and gentle, like all industrious people. To enliven themselves a little—for there was rather a want of gayety in their mechanical life—they formed a band among themselves, and performed selections of very tolerable music every evening. A library, a reading room, were valuable resources for the mind, from a scientific point of view, during the rare hours of leisure. Special courses held by professors were obligatory to all the men employed, who had besides to undergo frequent examinations and competitions. But fresh air and liberty were lacking in these narrow confines.

It was a regular college, only with extra strictness ex-

ercised on grown men. The surrounding atmosphere could not but weigh on their spirits, subjected as they were to an iron discipline.

The winter passed away in these employments, to which Max give himself up heart and soul. His application, the perfection of his drawings, his extraordinary progress in every subject he was taught, noticed by all his tutors and examiners, had made for him, even in this short time, and among all these diligent men, a corresponding celebrity. By general consent he was the most clever draughtsman, the most ingenious, the most fruitful in resources. Was there a difficulty? they applied to him. Even the chiefs themselves resorted to his experience, with the respect which merit extorts even from the most marked jealousy.

But if, on reaching the heart of the model division, the young man calculated that he would be any nearer getting at the innermost secrets, he was very much out in his reckoning. His life at present was enclosed within an iron railing three hundred yards in diameter, surrounding the segment of the central block to which he was attached. Intellectually, his activity could and should extend to the highest branches of metallurgic industry. In practice, it was limited to drawing steam engines. He constructed them of all dimensions and of all powers, for every kind of industry and use, for warships and for printing presses; but he never left this specialty. The division of labor pushed to its utmost limit held him as in a vice.

After four months passed in section A, Max knew no more of the entire plan of the works in the Steel City than he did on entering. At the most he had merely collected a little general information about the organization of the machinery of which he formed—notwithstanding his merits —but a very small portion. He knew that the center of the spider's web, figurative of Steeltown, was the Bull Tower, a kind of cyclopean structure, overlooking all the neighboring buildings.

He had learned, too, through the legendary stories of the canteen, that the dwelling of Herr Schultz himself was at the base of this tower, and that the renowned secret room occupied the center. It was added that this vaulted hall, protected against any danger of fire, and plated inside, as a monitor is plated outside, was closed by a system

of steel doors with spring-gun locks, worthy of the most suspicious bank. The general opinion was that Professor Schultz was working at the completion of a terrible engine of war of unprecedented power, and destined to assure universal dominion to Germany.

Max had revolved in his brain many most audacious plans of escalade and disguise, but had been compelled to acknowledge to himself that nothing of the sort was practicable. Those lines of somber and massive walls, flooded with light during the night, and guarded by trusty sentinels, would always oppose an insuperable obstacle to every attempt. But even if he did overcome it to some extent what would he see? Details, always details, never the whole!

What matter! He had sworn not to yield, and he would not yield. If it took ten years, he would wait that time. But the hour was coming when that secret would be his own. It must! The happy city Frankville was prospering, its beneficent institutions favoring each and all, and giving a new horizon of hope to a disheartened people. Max had no doubt that in the face of such a triumph to the Latin race, Schultz would be more than ever determined to make good his threats. Steeltown and its factories were a proof of that.

Thus many weeks passed away. One day in March, Max had just for the hundredth time repeated his secret vow, when one of the gray attendants informed him that the Director-General wished to speak to him. "I have received from Herr Schultz," said this high functionary, "an order to send him our best draughtsman. You are the man. Make your arrangements to pass into the inner circle. You are promoted to the rank of lieutenant."

Thus, at the very moment when he was almost despairing of success, his heroic toil at last procured him the much desired entrance! Max was so filled with delight that his joy exhibited itself on his countenance.

"I am happy to have such good news to announce to you," continued the Director; "and I cannot refrain from urging you to continue in the path you have begun to tread so gallantly. A brilliant future is before you. Go, sir."

So Max, after his long probation, caught the first glimpse of the end which he had sworn to reach! To stuff all his clothes into his portmanteau, follow the gray men, pass

through the last enclosure, of which the entrance in the A road might have been still forbidden to him, was the work of a few minutes.

He now stood at the foot of the inaccessible Bull Tower; until this moment he had but seen its lofty head reared among the clouds. The scene which lay before him was indeed an unexpected one. Imagine a man suddenly transported from a noisy, commonplace European workshop into the midst of a virgin forest in the torrid zone. Such was the surprise which awaited Max in the center of Steeltown.

As a virgin forest gains in beauty from the descriptions of great writers, so was Professor Schultz's park more beautiful than the most lovely of pleasure gardens. Slender palms, tufted bananas, curious cacti formed the shrubberies, creepers wound gracefully round eucalyptus trees, hung in green festoons, or fell in rich clusters. The most tender plants bloomed in abundance. Pineapples and guavas ripened beside oranges. Humming birds and birds of paradise displayed their brilliant plumage in the open air; for the temperature was as tropical as the vegetation.

Max instinctively looked around and above for glass and hot-air pipes to account for this miracle; seeing nothing but the blue sky he stopped bewildered.

Then it flashed upon him that not far from the spot was a coal mine in permanent combustion, and he guessed that Herr Schultz had ingeniously utilized this valuable subterranean heat, by means of metallic pipes, to maintain a constant hothouse atmosphere.

But this explanation did not prevent the young Alsacian's eyes from being dazzled and charmed with the green lawns, while his nostrils inhaled with delight the delicious scents which filled the air. To a man who had passed six months without seeing even a blade of grass, it was truly refreshing. A graveled path led him, by a gentle slope, to the foot of a handsome flight of marble steps, commanded by a majestic colonnade. Behind rose the huge and massive square building, which was as it were the pedestal of the Bull Tower.

Beneath the peristyle Max could see seven or eight servants in red livery, and a gorgeous porter in cocked hat, and bearing a halberd. And he noticed between the columns

rich bronze candelabra. As he ascended the steps a slight rumble betrayed that the underground railroad lay beneath his feet.

Max gave his name, and was immediately admitted into a hall, a regular museum of sculpture. Not having time to examine anything, he was conducted first through a saloon, adorned with black and gold, then through one with red and gold ornaments, and he was finally left alone for five minutes in a yellow and gold saloon. At the end of that time a footman returned and showed him into a splendid green and gold study.

Herr Schultz in person, smoking a long clay pipe, with a tankard of beer at his side, had the effect, in the midst of all this luxury, of a spot of mud on a patent-leather boot.

Without rising, without even turning his head, the King of Steel merely said, in a cold tone. "Are you the draughtsman?"

"Yes, sir."

"I have seen your diagrams. They are very good. But do you only understand steam engines?"

"I have never been examined in anything else."

"Do you know anything of the science of projectiles?"

"I have studied it in my spare time, and for my own pleasure."

This reply interested Herr Schultz. He deigned to turn and look at his employé. "Well, will you undertake to design a cannon with me? We shall see what you can make of it! Ah! you will be scarcely able to take the place of that idiot of a Sohne, who got killed this morning while handling some dynamite! The fool might have blown us all up!"

It must be acknowledged that this revolting want of feeling was only what might have been expected from the mouth of Herr Schultz.

CHAPTER VIII

THE DRAGON'S DEN

THE reader who has followed the progress of our young Alsacian's fortune will probably not be much surprised to find him, at the end of a few weeks, firmly established in Herr Schultz's favor. The two had become inseparable. They worked together, they ate and walked together, and together they sat smoking over their foaming glasses of beer. The ex-professor of Jena had never before met with a coadjutor so entirely after his own heart, one who caught his meaning with half a word, and who could so rapidly utilize his theoretical ideas.

Max not merely possessed transcendent merit in all branches of the profession, he was besides the most charming companion, the most diligent worker, the most modestly fertile inventor.

Herr Schultz was delighted with him. Ten times a day he said to himself, "What a treasure! what a pearl this fellow is!"

The truth was that Max had, at the first glance, seen through the character of his formidable patron, and perceiving that blind and insatiable vanity was its leading feature, he regulated his conduct by humoring the egotism which he despised.

In a few days the young man had acquired such skill in the fingering necessary for this human keyboard, that he could play upon Schultz as easily as one plays on a piano. His tactics merely consisted in exhibiting his own merits to advantage, but always in such a way as to leave an opening for his master to show superiority over him. For instance, when he finished a drawing he would leave it perfect, with the exception of some slight fault, as easy to see as to correct, and this the ex-professor immediately and exultantly pounced upon.

Had he some theoretical idea, he caused it so to open out in the course of conversation that Herr Schultz might fancy that he himself had originated it. Sometimes he even went further, boldly saying, "I have traced that plan of a vessel with the detached ram, which you asked for."

"I?" returned Herr Schultz, who had never dreamed of such thing.

"Why, yes! you don't mean to say you have forgotten? A detached ram, which will leave a spindle-shaped torpedo in the enemy's side, to burst after an interval of three minutes!"

"I had not the least recollection of it. That comes of having a head like mine! it is so full of inventive genius that I forget my own ideas." And Herr Schultz conscientiously pocketed the credit of the new invention.

Perhaps, after all, he was only half duped by this artifice. In his innermost heart he probably felt that Max was stronger than he. But by one of those mysterious workings which go on in the human brain, he was contented with the appearance of superiority as long as he could delude his subordinate.

"But the fellow must be an ass after all, in spite of his cleverness!" he would sometimes say to himself, with a silent laugh which showed all the thirty-two dominoes in his jaw.

His vanity, if ever wounded, was soon consoled by the reflection that he alone in all the world could carry out these inventions and ideas. They would have been of no value but for his gold. After all Max was only part of the mechanism which he, Schultz, had set going, etc., etc.

Yet, although in high favor, Max was never taken into the professor's confidence, and after five months' sojourn in the Bull Tower, he knew little more than at first of its mysteries. His suspicions had become certainties, and that was all. He was now convinced that Steeltown contained a secret, and that Herr Schultz had some aim far beyond that of gain. The nature of his occupations rendered the supposition that he had invented some perfectly new engine of warfare extremely probable.

But the enigma had still to be solved. Max at last came to the conclusion that it would be impossible to obtain the knowledge he sought without coming to some crisis, and this he resolved to provoke.

It was after dinner on the evening of the 5th of September; exactly a year since he had found the body of his little friend Carl in the Albrecht pit. Outside, the long severe American winter already covered the country with its white mantle; but in the park of Steeltown the temperature was as warm as during June, and the snow, melting before it touched the ground, fell in rain instead of flakes.

"Those sausages in sauerkraut were delicious, were they not?" remarked Herr Schultz, whose love of his favorite dish was unaffected by the Begum's millions.

"Delicious!" returned Max, who had heroically partaken of this mess every evening, till at last he hated the very sight of it. His feelings on this subject decided him at once to carry his meditated project into execution.

"I wonder," resumed Herr Schultz, with a sigh, "how people who have neither sausages, nor sauerkraut, nor beer, can endure existence."

"Life must be one long misery to them," replied Max. "It would really be a charity to unite all mankind with the Vaterland."

"Well! well! that will come, that will come!" exclaimed the King of Steel. "Here we are already installed in the heart of America. Just let us take an island or two in the neighborhood of Japan, and you will see in what a few strides we shall get round the globe!"

The footman now brought in the pipes; Herr Schultz filled and lighted his. Max had purposely determined to make use of this moment of supreme bliss, so began, after a few minutes' silence, "I must say that I don't quite believe in this conquest!"

"What conquest?" asked Herr Schultz, who had forgotten what was the topic of conversation.

"The conquest of the world by the Germans."

Schultz thought he had not heard correctly. "You do not believe in the conquest of the world by the Germans?"

"No."

"Oh, indeed, that is something strange! I am curious to know the reasons for your doubt."

"Simply because the French artillerymen will end by doing better, and will far surpass you. The Swiss, my fellow-countrymen, who know them well, are firmly convinced that a forewarned Frenchman is worth two Germans. The lesson of 1870 will be repeated against those who gave it. No one doubts this in my little country, sir, and if I may venture to say so, it is the opinion of the cleverest men in England." Max had uttered these words in a cool, dry, and decisive tone, which, if it were possible, doubled the effect of the point-blank blasphemy.

Herr Schultz glared wildly—his astonishment almost

choked him. Then the blood rushed to his face with such violence that the young man feared, for a moment, he had gone too far. However, seeing that rage had not stifled his victim, and that he would not die of the shock this time, he resumed, "Yes, it is annoying to think of; but it's the fact. Although our rivals make no noise about it, yet they are working. Do you think they have learned nothing since the war? While we are stupidly trying to increase the weight of our cannon, you may be certain that they are preparing something new, and that we shall see what it is on the very first opportunity!"

"Something new, something new!" stammered Herr Schultz. "We are doing that, too, sir!"

"Ah, yes, in a way. We are making in steel what our predecessors made in bronze, that's all. We double the proportions and the range of our pieces."

"Double!" exclaimed Herr Schultz, in a tone which signified, "Indeed! we do better than double!"

"In short," resumed Max, "we are plagiarists. See here, the truth is we lack any genius for inventing. We discover nothing, and the French do, and will, you may be sure."

Herr Schultz had become, outwardly at least, rather calmer, though his trembling lips, and the paleness which had succeeded the apoplectic crimson, betrayed the agitated state of his mind. Must he endure such a pitch of humiliation? To be the far-famed Schultz, the absolute master of the greatest manufactory and cannon foundry in the whole world, to have kings and parliaments at his feet, and then to be told by an insignificant Swiss draughtsman that he lacked invention, that he was below a French gunner! And all this when he had close to him, on the other side of a plated wall, something which would a thousand times confound the impudent rascal, shut him up completely, and sweep away all his idiotic arguments? No, it was not to be endured!

Herr Schultz rose so abruptly that he broke his pipe. Then, casting at Max a glance full of irony, he hissed out from between his set teeth, "Follow me, sir, I am about to show you whether I, Herr Schultz, have any lack of invention!"

Max had played high, but had won—thanks to the surprise his bold and unexpected language had produced, and

the passion he had aroused. Vanity being stronger than prudence with the ex-professor, Schultz was now eager to lay open his secret. He led the way with a hurried step into his study, closed the door carefully, and walking straight up to the bookcase, touched a panel. Immediately an opening, concealed by the rows of books, appeared in the wall. This was the entrance to a narrow passage, leading by a stone staircase to the very foot of the Bull Tower.

There, an oaken door was opened by means of a little key, which never left the possession of the master of the place. A second door appeared, fastened with a padlock, similar to those used for strong boxes. Herr Schultz threw open the heavy iron barrier, protected within by a complicated apparatus of explosive machinery, which Max, actuated by professional curiosity, would have much liked to examine; but his guide left him no time to do so.

The two men then found themselves before a third door, without any apparent lock or bolt, which yielded to a slight push, given, however, in a particular way. This third barrier passed, Herr Schultz and his companion climbed an iron staircase of two hundred steps, and arrived at the summit of the Bull Tower, overlooking all the city of Steeltown.

In the center of a sort of casemate, pierced with numerous embrasures, stood a steel cannon. "There!" exclaimed the professor, who had not uttered a word since they left the dining-room.

It was the most enormous piece of ordnance Max had ever beheld. A breach-loader of at least three hundred tons. Its mouth measured nearly five feet in diameter. Mounted on a steel carriage, and running on rails of the same metal, it might have been maneuvered by a child, so easy were all its movements made, by a system of cogged wheels. A spring, fixed at the back of the carriage, had the effect of annulling the recoil, or at least producing a perfectly equal reaction, so that after each shot the gun returned to its first position.

"And what may be the perforating power of this piece?" asked Max, who could not restrain his admiration.

"At twenty thousand yards we can pierce a forty-inch plate as easily as if it were a slice of bread and butter!"

"And its range?"

"Its range?" cried Schultz, enthusiastically. "Ah! you said just now that our imitative genius had done nothing more than double the range of former guns! Well, with this fellow, I would undertake to send, with tolerable precision, a projectile to the distance of thirty miles!"

"Thirty miles!" cried Max. "Thirty miles! What new powder can you use?"

"Oh! I can tell you everything, now," replied Herr Schultz, in a peculiar tone. "There is no inconvenience in revealing my secrets to you. Large grained powder has served its time. Guncotton is what I use; its expansive power is four times that of ordinary powder, and I increase it fivefold by mixing with it eight-tenths of its weight of nitrate of potash."

"But," observed Max, "no piece, though made of the best steel, could stand that long. After four or five shots your cannon will be impaired, and soon become useless."

"If it were only to fire one shot that one would be sufficient!"

"It would be an expensive one."

"It would cost a million, for that is the net cost of the gun."

"One shot worth a million!"

"What matter, so that it destroyed a thousand millions!"

"A thousand millions!" cried Max.

However, he restrained the mingled horror and admiration with which this fearful agent of destruction inspired him, and added, "It is assuredly a wonderful and astonishing piece of artillery, but, notwithstanding its merits, it bears out my theory, there are improvements certainly, but it is all imitation, no invention."

"No invention!" responded Herr Schultz, shrugging his shoulders. "I repeat that I have now no secrets from you. Come with me."

The King of Steel and his companion then left the casemate and descended to a lower story, by means of an hydraulic lift. Here lay a large number of long objects, cylindrical in shape, which might, from a distance, have been taken for dismounted cannon.

"There are our shells," said Herr Schultz.

This time Max was obliged to acknowledge that they resembled nothing he had ever seen before. They were

enormous tubes, six feet in length and three in diameter, sheathed in lead in such a way as to fit into the rifling of the gun, closed behind by a steel plate, and the point finished off by a steel tip, supplied with a percussion button. Nothing in their appearance indicated the special nature of these shells; though Max felt that in them was contained some terrible element of destruction, surpassing all that had ever before been made or thought of.

"Can you not guess?" asked Herr Schultz, seeing that his companion remained silent.

"Indeed, no, sir! Why should you want a shell so long and so heavy—in appearance at least?"

"The appearance is deceitful," answered Herr Schultz; "and there is no great difference in their weight to that of an ordinary shell of the same caliber. Come! I must tell you everything. A fusee shell of glass, encased in oak, charged with liquid carbonic acid by seventy atmospheres of interior pressure. The fall provokes the explosion of the case and the return of the liquid to a gaseous state. An enormous volume of carbonic acid gas rushes into the air, and a cold of a hundred degrees below zero seizes upon the surrounding atmosphere. Every living thing within a radius of thirty yards from the center of the explosion is at once frozen and suffocated. I say thirty yards as the lowest calculation, but the action would really extend much farther, say to a hundred or a couple of hundred yards.

"Another capital thing about it is, that the carbonic acid gas, remaining a very long time near the ground, by reason of its weight, being greater than that of air, will preserve the dangerous properties of the zone for many hours after the first explosion, so that any creature which may attempt to enter or pass through it, must infallibly perish. The effect of that shot will be both instantaneous and lasting. Besides, with my plan, there will be no wounded, only dead!"

Herr Schultz displayed manifest pleasure in exhibiting the merits of his invention. His good humor had returned, he was flushed with pride, and his teeth gleamed. "You are to imagine," he resumed, "a sufficient number of my pieces of ordnance directed against a besieged town. Supposing one sufficient for the destruction of a place of two acres and a half in extent, then, for a town of two thousand

five hundred acres, we must have a hundred batteries, each consisting of ten suitable guns. Now, let us suppose all our guns in position, the weather calm and favorable, the general signal given by an electric wire. In a minute there would not be a single living being remaining in an extent of two thousand five hundred acres! The town would be submerged in a regular ocean of carbonic acid gas! The idea occurred to me last year on reading the medical report of the accidental death of a little miner in the Albrecht pit. I had the first inspiration at Naples, when I visited the Dog Grotto. But that last fact was needed to put the finishing stroke to my thought. You comprehend the principle, do you not? An artificial ocean of pure carbonic acid! Now, the proportion of a fifth of this gas would be sufficient to render the air unbreathable."

Max did not utter a word. He was regularly struck dumb. Herr Schultz felt his triumph so keenly, that he did not wish to take advantage of it. "There is only one detail which troubles me," said he.

"And what can that be?" asked Max.

"I have not succeeded in suppressing the sound of the explosion. It makes my gun too much like a common cannon. Just think of what it would be if I could manage to have a silent shot. Sudden death comes noiselessly upon a hundred thousand men at once, on some calm and serene night!"

The enchanting prospect thus called up, threw Herr Schultz into a brown study. From this reverie, which was but a deep immersion in a bath of self-love, he was aroused by Max observing, "Very good, sir, very good! but a thousand guns of this description mean time and money."

"Money? we are overflowing with it! Time? Time is ours!" And indeed this German, the latest of his school, believed what he said.

"Well," replied Max, "your shell loaded with carbonic acid is not perfectly new after all, for it is derived from those suffocating projectiles which have been known for many years; but that it may be eminently destructive, I do not deny. Only——"

"Only?"

"It is light for its size, and if it is ever projected thirty miles——"

"It is only made to go six," answered Herr Schultz, smiling. "But," he added, pointing to another shell, "here is one of steel. This fellow is full, and contains a hundred little guns, symmetrically arranged, fitted one into the other, like the parts of a telescope. Having been fired as projectiles, they will become cannon to vomit forth in their turn little shells loaded with incendiary matter. It will be a whole battery hurled through space, to carry flame and death into a town by covering it with a shower of inextinguishable fire! This has the requisite weight to go the thirty miles of which I spoke. In a short time a trial of it will be made in such a way that unbelievers may go if they like and handle the hundred thousand corpses which it will have stretched on the ground!"

Here the dominoes gleamed so intolerably in Herr Schultz's mouth, that Max felt a strong desire to smash in a dozen or so of them, but contained himself. He had not yet heard all.

Herr Schultz resumed, "I have said that a decisive experiment is shortly to be made."

"How? Where?" cried Max.

"How? With one of these shells, which thrown by my gun from the platform, will cross the Cascade mountains. Where? There exists a city, separated from us by at most thirty miles, upon whose inhabitants it will come like a thunder-clap, for even if they expected it, they could not ward it off, or escape the startling effects. This is now the 5th of September. Well, on the 13th, at a quarter before midnight, Frankville will disappear from off American soil! The burning of Sodom will be rivaled. Professor Schultz, in his turn, will let loose the fires of Heaven!"

At this unexpected declaration Max felt the blood curdle in his veins. Fortunately Herr Schultz did not perceive his agitation.

"Now you see," he continued in an easy tone, "we act just contrary to the founders of Frankville. We search for the secret of abridging the lives of men, while they seek to lengthen them. However, everything has an object in nature, and Dr. Sarrasin, by founding that isolated city, has, without suspecting it, placed a most magnificent field of experiments within my reach."

Max could scarcely believe his ears. "But," said he, and the involuntary tremor in his voice attracted for a moment the attention of the King of Steel, "the inhabitants of Frankville have done nothing to you, sir. You have not, so far as I know, any reason for picking a quarrel with them."

"My dear fellow," replied Herr Schultz, "in your brain, though well organized in other respects, there is a fund of Celtic ideas, which would do you much injury were you to live long enough! Right—Good—Evil are purely relative, and quite conventional words. Nothing is positive but the grand laws of nature. The law of competition has the same claim as that of gravitation. It is folly to resist, while to submit and follow in the way it points out, is only wise and reasonable, and therefore I mean to destroy Dr. Sarrasin's city. Thanks to my cannon, my fifty thousand Germans will easily make an end of the hundred thousand dreamers over there, who now constitute a group condemned to perish."

Seeing that an attempt to argue with Herr Schultz would be useless, Max did not try to soften him. The two then left the shell chamber, closed the secret doors, and returned to the dining-room. In the coolest, most natural way, the professor again lifted his tankard to his lips, touched a bell, called for a pipe in the place of the one he had broken, and then addressing the footman, "Are Arminius and Sigimer there?" he asked.

"Yes, sir."

"Tell them to remain within call."

When the servant had left the room, the King of Steel turned to Max and looked him full in the face.

The latter's eyes did not quail before that look of almost metallic hardness. "You mean really," said he, "to put your project into execution?"

"Really. I know the situation and the latitude and longitude of Frankville to the tenth of a second, and on the 13th of September, at a quarter before midnight, it will cease to be."

"Perhaps you ought to have kept this plan an absolute secret."

"My dear fellow," answered Herr Schultz, "decidedly your mind never would become logical. This makes me regret the less that you must die young."

At these words Max started up.

"Is it possible you do not understand," added Herr Schultz, coldly, "that I never speak of my plans but before those who cannot repeat them?"

The bell rang. Arminius and Sigimer, two giants, appeared at the door.

"You wished to know my secret," said Herr Schultz, "you do know it. Nothing remains for you but to die!"

Max did not reply.

"You are too intelligent," resumed Herr Schultz, "to suppose that I can let you live, now that you know all about my plans. That would be an act of unpardonable carelessness; that would be illogical. The greatness of my aim forbids me to compromise its success for the consideration of a relative value so trifling as the life of a man—even of such a man as you, my dear fellow, whose good cerebral organization I most particularly esteem. Now I truly regret that a little moment of self-love should have carried me away and placed me under the necessity of suppressing you. But you must understand that in the face of the interests to which I have devoted myself, there can be no question of sentiment. I may as well tell you now, that it was for having penetrated my secret that your predecessor met his death, and not by an explosion of dynamite! The rule is strict, it must be inflexible! I can alter nothing."

Max looked at Herr Schultz. He understood by the sound of his voice, by the unrelenting obstinacy of that bald head that he was lost. He did not give himself the trouble of uttering a word of protest. "When, and by what death shall I die?" he merely asked.

"Don't be uneasy about that," replied Herr Schultz, composedly. "You will die; but suffering will be spared you. You will not wake up some morning. That is all."

At a sign from the King of Steel, Max found himself led away, and shut into his room, the door of which was guarded by the two giants. When he found himself alone, he thought with a shudder of agony and rage of the doctor, his compatriots, all those whom he loved.

"The death which awaits me is nothing," he said to himself. "But how am I to avert the danger which threatens them?"

CHAPTER IX

P. P. C.

The situation was indeed serious. What could poor Max do, he whose hours were already numbered, and whose last night might have come with the setting sun.

He did not sleep for an instant, not from the dread of never awaking, as Herr Schultz had said, but because his heart was too full of thoughts of Frankville and of the impending catastrophe.

"What shall I attempt?" he thought to himself. "To destroy that gun? Blow up the tower it stands on? How could I manage it? Escape! Escape? when my room is guarded by a couple of giants? And then suppose I could get away from Steeltown before the 13th of September, how could I help them? To be sure, if not our beloved city, I might at least save the inhabitants. I might fly to them shouting, "Escape! escape without delay! You are in danger of perishing by fire and steel! Fly, all of you, for your lives!"

Then Max's thoughts passed into another channel.

"That villain Schultz!" he thought. "Even admitting that he has exaggerated the destructive effects of his shell, and that he cannot really fire the whole town, it is very certain that with a single shot he can burn a considerable part! It's a frightful machine he has invented, and notwithstanding the distance between the two towns, it will easily send the projectile over it! The speed, too, must be twenty times superior to any hitherto obtained. Something like ten thousand yards, or nine miles a second! It's actually a third of the speed of the earth in its orbit! Is it possible? Oh, if only that horrible gun would blow up at the first shot! But there is no hope of that, for the metal of which it is made will stand anything. How exactly the wretch knows the position of Frankville! Without going out of his den, he can point his cannon with mathematical precision, and, as he said, the shell will undoubtedly fall in the very heart of the city! How can the unhappy inhabitants be warned?"

Max had not closed an eyelid when day dawned. He then rose from the bed, on which he had tossed in feverish restlessness. "Come," he said to himself, "it will be for

another night. As this executioner means to spare me suffering, he no doubt will wait till sleep, getting the better of my anxiety, has overpowered me. And then! What sort of death can he have in store for me? Does he think of killing me with some decoction of prussic acid while I sleep? Will he introduce some of that carbonic acid gas, which he has at his command, into my room? Will he not rather use it in a liquid form, such as he has in his glass shells, when its sudden return to a gaseous state produces a hundred degrees of frost? And the next day, instead of 'me,' instead of this strong, well-constituted body, so full of life, there will be nothing but a dried, frozen, shrivelled mummy! Oh, the savage! Well, well, if it must be so, let my heart be frozen and my life wither away in that unbearable atmosphere, if only my friends, Dr. Sarrasin, his family, Jeannette—my little Jeannette—may be saved! But to effect that I must escape. Well, escape I will!"

As he uttered these words, Max, though he believed himself locked into his room, instinctively laid his hand on the handle of the door.

To his great surprise it opened, and he went down as usual, and out into the garden, where he was accustomed to walk.

"Ah," he thought, "I am a prisoner in the Central Block, though not in my room. That's something in my favor!"

However, no sooner was Max outside than he saw that, though apparently free, he in reality could not make a step without being escorted by the two personages who answered to the historic, or rather pre-historic, names of Arminius and Sigimer.

He had often wondered, when he met them about the place, what could be the duty of those two huge men in grey cloaks, with their bull necks, herculean muscles, dark red faces, bristling with mustaches and bushy whiskers.

He now knew what that duty was. They were the executioners of Herr Schultz's darkest deeds, who for the present were acting as his body-guard!

These two giants never let him out of their sight, lying at the door of his room, and dogging his steps when he walked in the park. The formidable array of revolvers and daggers which each carried in his belt rendered hopeless any attempt to escape from them.

With all this, they were as dumb as fish.

Max tried, in a diplomatic way, to get up a conversation with them, but only received a ferocious glare in reply. Even the offer of a glass of beer, which he had some reason to suppose irresistible, was made in vain. After observing them for fifteen hours, he discovered that they had one weakness, only one—a pipe, which they took the liberty of smoking close at his heels. This single weakness Max determined to turn to account. How, he did not know, he could not even imagine, but he had vowed to escape, and nothing should be neglected that could in any way assist him.

Time was pressing. What was to be done?

At the least sign of rebellion or flight, Max was sure of receiving a couple of bullets in his head. Even supposing they missed, he was still in the center of a triple fortified line, guarded by a triple row of sentinels.

According to his custom, the former pupil of the Central School correctly put the situation in the form of a mathematical problem. "Given, a man guarded by two unscrupulous ruffians, individually stronger than he, and armed to the teeth. The man must first escape the vigilance of these warders. This done, he must get out of a fortified place, all the entrances to which are strictly watched." Max pondered this double question a hundred times, but always came to the conclusion, "Which is impossible." However, the gravity of his situation seemed to sharpen all his faculties of invention. Whether chance alone gave the finishing touch or not would be difficult to say.

It happened that the next day, as Max was walking in the park, his eyes fell on a shrub, the appearance of which instantly attracted him. It was a dull-looking herbaceous plant, its leaves alternately oval, pointed and double, with great red bell-shaped monopetalous flowers hanging by auxiliary stalks. Max had merely studied botany as an amateur, but it immediately occurred to him that this shrub had the characteristics of one of the order Solanaceæ.

Quite at a venture, he gathered a leaf and slightly chewed it as he pursued his walk. He was not mistaken. A feeling of heaviness in his limbs, accompanied by a sensation of nausea, soon convinced him that he had close at hand a natural laboratory of belladonna, that is to say, the most active of all narcotics.

He strolled on until he reached a small artificial lake, which stretched away to the southern end of the park, and supplied a cascade, which, by the bye, was evidently copied from that in the Bois de Boulogne. "Where does the water of that cascade go to?" thought Max.

It first flowed into the bed of a little river, which, after describing various turns and bends, finally disappeared at the limits of the park. There was evidently an outlet, and, to all appearance, the river escaped by filling one of the subterranean channels which watered the plain beyond Steeltown. In this Max saw a gate of egress. It was certainly not a carriage way, but it was an opening.

"And suppose the channel is barred by an iron grating!" objected the voice of prudence.

"Nothing venture, nothing have! Files weren't made to gnaw away corks, and there are capital files in the laboratory!" so answered another ironical voice, one that prompted daring resolves.

In two minutes Max's determination was made. An idea —as it may be called—had darted into his mind, one that perhaps could not after all be carried out, but which he would attempt, if death did not first overtake him.

He sauntered back toward the shrub with red flowers, and gathered two or three leaves in such a way that his guards could not fail to see him. Returning to his room, he quite openly dried these leaves before the fire, rubbed them in his hands to crush them, and mixed them with his tobacco.

During the six following days, Max, to his extreme surprise, woke up quite well every morning. Had Herr Schultz, whom he had not again seen and never met in his walks—had he given up his plan of making away with him? No, it was not likely, any more than he would relinquish that of destroying Dr. Sarrasin's city.

Max made use of this permission to live, and every day renewed his maneuver. He took care, of course, never to smoke the belladonna himself, and therefore kept two packets of tobacco, one for his personal use, the other for daily show. His object was simply to arouse the curiosity of Arminius and Sigimer. Confirmed smokers, such as these two ruffians, were sure soon to notice the shrub from which he took the leaves, imitate the operation, and try how

they liked the mixture. This supposition was correct, and the result proved equal to his anticipations.

On the sixth day, the eve of the fatal 13th of September, Max, as he glanced carelessly behind him, had the satisfaction of seeing his guards collect a little store of the green leaves. An hour later, he observed that they were drying them at the fire, rubbing them in their great, horny hands, and mixing them with their tobacco. They seemed already licking their lips in anticipation.

Was it Max's intention merely to stupefy Arminius and Sigimer? No, that was not sufficient. Eluding their vigilance, he had still to pass down that stream, even if it should prove to be miles in length. But he had arranged his plan. It was true, there were nine chances in ten that he would perish; but as he was already condemned to death, that did not much matter.

Evening came, with it the supper hour, afterward a walk. The inseparable trio took the way into the park. Without hesitating, without losing a minute, Max proceeded straight toward a building, standing alone, and which was no other than the workshop where all the models were made. He sat down on a bench outside, filled his pipe, and began to smoke. Arminius and Sigimer also sat down on a neighboring seat and soon were puffing away.

The effects of the narcotic were not long in becoming visible. Before five minutes had passed, the two clumsy giants were yawning and stretching like bears in a cage. Their eyes grew dim, a dull sound was in their ears; their complexions changed from red to purple, their arms fell useless at their sides, their heads dropped on their breasts. The pipes slipped to the ground. Then followed loud snoring, mingled with the twittering of the birds, who lived all the year round in the perpetual summer of the Steeltown park.

Now was Max's time. His impatience may be imagined, when it is remembered that in the next night, at a quarter before midnight, Frankville, having been sentenced by Herr Schultz, would cease to exist.

He darted into the workshop. It was a large building, a perfect museum of models. Hydraulic machines, locomotives, steam engines, portable engines, suction pumps, boring machines, ships, ship machinery, in fact, the masterpieces would be too numerous to mention. It was a collection of

models in wood of everything made in the Schultz manufactory since its foundation, and you may be sure that many cannon, torpedoes, and shells were among them.

The night was dark, and favorable to the young Alsacian's daring project. Besides accomplishing his escape, he hoped to destroy the Steeltown Model Museum.

How he longed to annihilate the huge Bull Tower, with its destructive cannon and all it contained; but it was useless to think of that.

Max's first care was to seize a little steel saw, fit for filing iron, which was hanging from a tool-rack, and slip it into his pocket. Then taking a match from his box, he struck it, set fire to a heap of drawings and slight fir-wood models, and rushed out.

The fire, spreading among all these inflammable materials, increased with great rapidity, and flames speedily burst forth from every part of the building. The alarm-bell rang, the electric wire carried the news to every quarter of Steeltown, peals sounded, and firemen and engines hastened from all directions. At the same moment Herr Schultz, whose presence was well calculated to encourage the workers, made his appearance.

In a very few minutes the powerful pumps were at work. But in spite of the deluges of water which fell on the walls and roofs, the fire gained force, and it was soon evident that all hope of mastering it must be given up. It was a grand and terrible spectacle.

Crouched in a corner, Max never lost sight of Herr Schultz, who cheered on his men as if assaulting a town. There was no necessity for giving a further helping hand to the fire. The Museum, standing as it did alone in the park, would soon be entirely consumed.

Herr Schultz, seeing that the building itself could not possibly be saved, suddenly shouted out, "Ten thousand dollars to whoever will save model No. 3175 from the glass case in the center!"

This was the very mold of Schultz's famous cannon, and he valued it above all other things in the Museum.

To reach it, however, a person would be compelled to make his way through a deluge of sparks and falling wood, and an unbreathable atmosphere of dense black smoke. It was ten to one that he would not escape with his life. Not-

withstanding, therefore, the magnificence of Herr Schultz's offer, no one answered to his appeal.

At last a man presented himself. It was Max.

"I will go," said he.

"You!" exclaimed Herr Schultz.

"Yes, I!"

"It won't save you from the sentence of death pronounced against you, so don't imagine it!"

"I do not propose to avoid that, but to snatch your precious model from destruction."

"Go, then," answered Herr Schultz, "and I swear that if you succeed, the ten thousand dollars shall be faithfully made over to your heirs."

"I will depend on you for that," returned Max.

Several of the Galibert apparatus were brought to him; they were always at hand in case of fire, as they enabled men to venture into the densest smoke. Max had already made use of one when he tried to save from death dame Bauer's boy, poor little Carl. One of these was soon filled with air and placed on his back. He put the pincers on his nose, took the tube in his mouth, and darted into the smoke.

"At last!" said he. "This air will last for a quarter of an hour! Heaven grant that may be time enough!"

As may be imagined, Max had not the slightest intention of endeavoring to save Schultz's cannon model. His life every moment in dire peril, he made his way across the smoke-filled hall, amid a shower of blazing brands and charred beams. Mercifully none of them touched him, and just as the roof fell in with a fearful crash, Max escaped at the opposite side of the building.

To fly toward the stream, run along its banks till he reached the unknown opening and plunge in, was the work of only a few seconds. The rapid current swept him along in a depth of seven or eight feet. He had no need to guide himself, for the water bore him as straight as if he had held Ariadne's clue.

He soon found he had entered a narrow channel, a sort of pipe, quite filled by the overflow of the river. "What can be the length of this tunnel?" thought Max. "Everything depends on that! If I do not pass through it in a quarter of an hour, the air will fail and I am lost!"

He maintained his coolness and presence of mind. Ten

minutes passed, when suddenly he was driven up against some obstacle. This was an iron grating on hinges, barring the way down the tunnel.

"This is what I feared!" thought Max, simply.

Without losing a moment, he took the saw from his pocket, and set to work on the bolt of the staple. Five minutes' labor did not loosen it, the grating remained obstinately closed. Already Max breathed with difficulty. There came a buzzing in his ears, the blood mounted in his head, he felt he would soon lose consciousness.

He endeavored, however, to make the most of the small quantity of air remaining by taking breath as seldom as possible! Though half sawed through, the bolt would not yield! At that moment the saw slipped from his hands.

"Surely God himself cannot be against me!" was his thought. And grasping the grating with both hands, he shook it with the despairing energy given by the instinct of self-preservation.

The grating opened. The bolt had given way, and the current carried onward the daring Alsacian, nearly suffocated, yet still feebly struggling, as he inhaled the last particles of air in the reservoir!

The next day, when Herr Schultz's men ventured into the ruins left by the fire, they searched in vain among all the débris and still smouldering cinders for any trace of human remains. It was evident that the brave workman had perished. His daring act astonished none of his friends who had known him in the different workshops.

The precious model was not saved, but the man who was acquainted with the secrets of the Steel King was dead.

"Heaven is witness that I wished to spare him all suffering," said Herr Schultz to himself, in his usual serene fashion. "At any rate, as I know not his heirs, I am saved ten thousand dollars!" Such was the only funeral oration pronounced by the philosophical professor over the supposed grave of our young Alsacian!

CHAPTER X

AN ARTICLE FROM "UNSERE CENTURIE," A GERMAN REVIEW

A MONTH before the period at which the events we have just related occurred, a review, in a salmon-colored wrapper, entitled "Our Century," published the following article on the subject of Frankville, an article which was particularly relished by the fastidious people of the German Empire, perhaps, because it only studied that city from a purely material point of view:

"We have already given our readers an account of the extraordinary phenomenon which has been produced on the western coast of the United States. The great American Republic, owing to the large proportion of emigrants included in its population, has for long accustomed the world to a succession of surprises; but the last, and certainly the most singular, is that of a city named Frankville. Though the very idea of it did not exist five years ago, it is now flourishing, and in the highest degree of prosperity.

"This marvelous city has risen as if by enchantment on the balmy shores of the Pacific. We will not inquire whether it is true (as we are assured) that the first plan and idea of this enterprise is due to a Frenchman, Dr. Sarrasin. The thing is possible, as this doctor may boast a distant relationship with our illustrious King of Steel. We may also say in passing, it is rumored that a considerable inheritance, which should properly have come to Herr Schultz, has had something to do with the founding of Frankville. Wherever any good springs up in the world, we may be certain that it is from German seed; this is a truth we are proud of stating whenever an opportunity offers. But, however that may be, we now wish to give our readers some precise and authentic details on the subject of the spontaneous vegetation of a model city.

"It is useless to look for its name on the map. Even the great atlas in three hundred and seventy-eight folio volumes, by our eminent Tuchtigmann, in which every thicket and clump of trees in the old and new world are put in with such exactitude, even this noble monument to geographical science, designed for the use of sharpshooters, does not bear the least trace of Frankville.

" The place where the new city now stands was, five years ago, a complete desert. The exact spot lies 43° 11′ 3″ north latitude, and 124° 41′ 17″ west longitude.

" It will be seen that this is on the shores of the Pacific Ocean, and at the foot of the secondary chain of the Rocky Mountains, called the Cascade Mountains, sixty miles to the north of White Cape, Oregon State, North America.

" This most advantageous site has been carefully sought and chosen from among a number of others. The prominent reasons for its adoption are the temperate climate of the northern hemisphere, which has always been at the head of terrestrial civilization; its position, in the middle of a federative republic, and in a still new state, which has allowed it to secure its independence, and rights similar to those possessed by the principality of Monaco in Europe, on the condition that after a certain number of years it would enter the Union. Its situation on the ocean, which is becoming more and more the great highway of the globe; the varied, fertile, and salubrious nature of the soil; the proximity of a chain of mountains, sheltering it from the north, south, and east winds, leaving to the fresh Pacific breeze the care of renovating the atmosphere of the city; the possession of a little river, whose fresh, sweet, clear water, oxygenated by repeated falls, and by the rapidity of its course arrives perfectly pure at the sea; lastly, a natural port, formed by a long, curved promontory, which may easily be enlarged by moles.

" A few secondary advantages may be mentioned, such as the proximity of fine marble and stone quarries, bearings of kaolin, and even traces of auriferous ore. In fact, this last detail was almost the cause of the site being given up, for the founders of the town feared that the gold fever might come in the way of their plans. Fortunately, however, the nuggets were found to be small and not numerous.

" The choice of a territory, although determined upon after serious and close study, took but a few days, and was not made the subject of a special expedition. Science is now so far advanced that, without leaving his study, a man may gather exact and particular information about the most distant regions.

" This point decided, two commissioners of the organ-

ization committee took the first boat from Liverpool, arrived in eleven days at New York, in seven more at San Francisco, where they chartered a steamer, which in ten hours landed them on the proposed site.

"To come to terms with the Legislature of Oregon, to obtain a grant of twelve miles of land on the shores of the sea on the crest of the Cascade Mountains, to indemnify with a few thousand dollars the half-dozen planters who had some real or supposed rights on the ground, all this business did not take more than a month.

"By January, 1872, the territory was already surveyed, measured, laid out, and an army of twenty thousand Chinese coolies, under the direction of five hundred overseers and European engineers, were hard at work. Placards posted up all over the State of California, an advertisement van permanently attached to the rapid train, which starts every morning from San Francisco to traverse the American continent, and a daily article in the twenty-three newspapers of that town, were sufficient to insure the recruiting of the laborers. It was not even found necessary to resort to the expedient of publishing on a grand scale, by means of gigantic letters sculptured on the peaks of the Rocky Mountains, that men were wanted. It must be said that the influx of Chinese coolies into western America had just at this time caused much perturbation in the labor market. Several States had, in the interest of their own population, actually expelled these unfortunate people *en masse*. The building of Frankville came just in time to save them from perishing. Their wages, fixed at a dollar a day, were not to be paid them until the works were finished, and their rations were distributed by the municipal administration. Thus all the disorder and shameful speculations, which so often attend any great displacement of population, were avoided. The wages were deposited every week, in the presence of delegates, in the great bank at San Francisco, and every coolie was warned that when he drew it out, he was not to return. This precaution was absolutely necessary to get rid of a yellow population, which would otherwise have infallibly lowered the tone and standard of the new city. The founders having, besides, reserved the right of granting or refusing permission to live there, the application of this measure was comparatively easy.

"The first great enterprise was the establishment of a branch railway, connecting the territory of the new town with the trunk of the Pacific Railroad, and running to Sacramento. These works, and those of the harbor, were pushed on with extraordinary activity. In April, the first train, direct from New York, brought to the Frankville terminus the members of the committee, who, until this time, had remained in Europe.

"In this interval, the general plan of the town, the details of habitations and public monuments had been stopped.

"This was not from want of materials; from the very first, American industry had hastened to load the quays of Frankville with every imaginable requisite for building. It was merely the difficulty of choice. The founders at last decided that the freestone should be reserved for national edifices and general ornamentation, and that all houses should be built of brick. Not, it must be understood, of common, roughly molded, half-baked bricks, but light, well-shaped ones, regular in size, weight, and density, and pierced from end to end with a series of cylindrical and parallel holes. These bricks, when placed together, allowed the air to circulate freely throughout the walls of the building. This arrangement had at the same time the valuable effect of deadening sounds, and giving complete independence to each apartment.

"The committee did not wish to impose a model on the builders. They were averse to a wearisome and insipid uniformity, and merely gave a certain number of fixed rules, to which the architects were bound to adhere.

"1st.—Each house to stand alone in a plot of ground planted with trees, grass, and flowers, and to be inhabited by a single family.

"2d.—No house to be more than two stories high: air and light must not be monopolized by some, to the detriment of others.

"3d.—Every house must be set back ten yards from the road, and divided from it by a breast-high railing. The space between the building and the railing must be laid out as a garden.

"4th.—The walls to be built of the patent tubular bricks, similar to the model. All ornamentation to be left to the taste of the architect.

" 5th.—The roofs to be in terraces, slightly inclined from the four sides, covered with bitumen, surrounded by a balustrade high enough to render accidents impossible, and proper canals made for the passing off of rain-water.

" 6th.—All the houses must be built on a vaulted foundation, open on each side, and thus forming under the ground-floor a subsoil of aeration, as well as a hall. All water-pipes must be exposed, running up the central pillar, in such a way that it may be always easy to ascertain their state, and in case of fire, to be able to obtain the necessary water immediately. The floor of this hall, rising about three inches above the level of the road, must be properly graveled. A door and a special staircase will place it in direct communication with the kitchens and offices, so that all household transactions may go on without offending either the eyes or the nose.

" 7th.—The kitchens and offices will, contrary to the usual custom, be placed in the upper story, and in communication with the terrace. A lift, moved by mechanical force, which, like artificial light and water, will be supplied at reduced prices to the inhabitants, will easily convey all loads to this level.

" 8th.—The plan of the rooms is left to individual taste. But two dangerous elements of illness, regular nests of miasma and laboratories of poison, are to be strictly excluded—carpets and painted papers. The floors, beautifully inlaid with valuable woods by clever workmen, would be quite wasted were they hidden under a woolen cloth of doubtful cleanliness. The walls, lined with polished bricks, present the brilliancy and variety of the inner apartments of Pompeii, with a luxury of color which painted paper, charged with its thousand subtle poisons, could never reach. They are washed as windows are washed, and rubbed like ceilings and floors. Not even a germ of anything harmful can be harbored there.

" 9th.—Each bedroom is distinct from the dressing-room. It cannot be too much recommended that the former apartment, where a third of a man's life is passed, should be the largest, the most airy, and at the same time the most simple. It must only be used for sleep; four chairs, an iron bedstead, supplied with two frequently beaten mattresses, is the only necessary furniture. Eiderdown quilts and heavy

coverlets, powerful allies of epidemics, are excluded as a matter of course. Good woolen coverings, light and warm, and easily washed, replace them well. Though curtains and draperies are not absolutely forbidden, it is recommended that, if used, they should be made of washing materials.

" 10th.—Each room may be warmed according to fancy by wood or coal; but to every chimney is a corresponding opening to the outer air. The smoke, instead of issuing through the roof, is led away by subterranean pipes to special furnaces, established, outside the town, at the back of the houses, at the rate of a furnace to every two hundred inhabitants. There it is deprived of the particles of carbon which it bears, and is discharged in a colorless state into the air, at a height of thirty-five yards. Such are the ten rules imposed on the building of each particular house.

" The general arrangements are no less carefully studied.

" The plan of the town is essentially simple and regular, the roads crossing at right angles, at equal distances, of a uniform width, planted with trees, and numbered.

" Some of the roads being wider, are then called boulevards or avenues, and leave on one side rails for tramways and metropolitan railways. Public gardens are numerous, and ornamented with fine copies of the masterpieces of sculpture, until the artists of Frankville shall have produced original pieces worthy to replace them.

" Any one wishing to have the right of living in Frankville must give good references, be fit to follow a useful or liberal profession in industry, science, or the arts, and must engage to keep the laws of the town. An idle life would not be tolerated there.

" There are already a large number of public edifices. The most important are the cathedral, chapels, museums, libraries, schools, and gymnasiums, fitted up with the luxury and hygienic skill worthy of a great city.

" It is needless to say that from the age of four years all children are obliged to follow physical and intellectual exercises, calculated to develop the brain and muscles. They are also accustomed to such strict cleanliness, that they consider a spot on their simple clothes quite a disgrace.

" Individual and collective cleanliness is the great idea of the founders of Frankville. To clean, clean unceasingly, so as to destroy the miasmas constantly emanating from a

large community, such is the principal work of the central government. For this purpose, all the contents of the drains are led out of the town, condensed, and daily transferred to the fields.

"Water flows everywhere in abundance.

"The streets are paved with bituminated wood; and the stone footpaths are as spotless as a courtyard in Holland. The provision markets are subject to strict surveillance, and any merchants who dare to speculate on the public health incur the severest penalties. The man who sells a bad egg, damaged meat, or a pint of adulterated milk, is treated as the poisoner he really is. This necessary and delicate office is confided to experienced men, who receive a special education for it. Their jurisdiction extends to the very laundries, which are on a large scale, provided with steam engines, artificial dryers, and, above all, with disinfecting-rooms. No body-linen is sent back to its owners without being thoroughly bleached, and special care is taken never to mix the washing of two families. This simple precaution is of great value. Hospitals are few in number, for the system of house nursing is general, and they are reserved for homeless strangers and exceptional cases. The idea of making the hospital larger than any other building, and of putting seven or eight hundred patients under one roof, so as to make a center of infection, would not enter the head of the founders of this model city. Far from this, it is in their as well as in the public interest, to isolate the sick as much as possible. This is the plan pursued in the houses, the hospitals being merely for the temporary accommodation of the most pressing cases.

"Twenty or thirty patients at most, each having a separate apartment, are put into these light barracks, which are built of fir-wood, and burnt regularly every year. They have, besides, the advantage of being easily carried from one part of the town to another as they are wanted, and, being all on one model, can be multiplied to any extent.

"Another ingenious institution is that of a body of experienced nurses, specially trained for the purpose, and always at the disposal of the public. These women, being carefully chosen, are most valuable and devoted aids to the doctors. They bring into the bosom of families that practical knowledge, so necessary and yet so often absent; in

the time of danger it is their mission to prevent the spread of the disease as well as to tend the sick.

"We should never finish were we to attempt to enumerate all the hygienic perfections inaugurated by the founders of this new town. On his arrival each citizen is presented with a small pamphlet, in which the most important principles of a life, regulated according to science, are set forth in clear and simple language.

"He is there told that the perfect equilibrium of all the functions is one of the necessities for health, that work and rest are equally indispensable, that fatigue is as necessary for the brain as for the muscles; that nine-tenths of the illnesses are owing to contagion transmitted by air and food. He cannot surround his dwelling and his person with too many sanitary precautions. To avoid the use of exciting poisons, to practise bodily exercises, to perform every day some appointed duty, to drink pure water, to eat fresh meat and vegetables simply prepared, to sleep regularly seven or eight hours a night, such is the A B C of health.

"Beginning from the first principles laid down by the founders, we have been led on to speak of this singular city as already finished. It is indeed so; the first houses built, the others rose as if by magic. A man should have previously visited the far west in order to realize the wonderful change. The site that was a desert in the month of January, 1872, contained six thousand houses in 1873. In 1874 it possessed nine thousand, and all public edifices complete.

"Speculation has certainly had its part in this unheard-of success. The ground having cost nothing, the houses could be sold or let at very moderate prices. There being no taxes, the political independence of this isolated little territory, its novelty, and the pleasant climate, all contributed to induce emigration. At the present time Frankville contains nearly a hundred thousand inhabitants.

"But to us the most interesting part of it is that the result of the sanitary experiment is conclusive.

"While the annual mortality in the most favored towns of Europe or the New World has never been less than three per cent., in Frankville for these five years the average has been one and a half. Even this figure was increased by a slight fever epidemic during the first summer. That of the

last year was only one and a quarter. And a more important circumstance still is that, with but a few exceptions, all the deaths actually registered were due to specific and hereditary affections. Accidental illnesses have been at once infinitely rarer, and less dangerous, than in any other great center. As to epidemics, properly so called, nothing has been seen or heard of them.

"It will be interesting to follow the development of this attempt, and certainly curious to discover if the influence of this scientific régime may not in the course of a generation, or more likely still, after several generations, weaken hereditary and morbid predispositions.

"'It is assuredly not too much to hope,' as one of the founders has written, 'and if so what may not be the grandeur of the result! Everybody living for ninety or a hundred years, and then only dying of old age, as do the greater number of animals and plants.'

"There is something enchanting in such a dream! Nevertheless, if we may be allowed to express our sincere opinion, we have but an indifferent belief in the actual success of this experiment. We see in it an original and probably fatal flaw, which is its being in the hands of a committee in which the Latin element prevails, and from which the German element has been systematically excluded. That is a bad symptom. Since the world began nothing durable has been made but by Germany, and without her nothing perfect can be effected. The founders of Frankville may clear the ground, and elucidate some special points; not, however, on this spot in America, but on the borders of Syria, shall we one day see the true model city arise."

CHAPTER XI

AT DINNER WITH DR. SARRASIN

On the 13th of September, although it wanted but a few hours to the time fixed on by Professor Schultz for the destruction of Frankville, neither the governor nor a single person among the inhabitants dreamed of the danger which threatened them.

Seven o'clock in the evening arrived.

Half buried in thick masses of oleander and tamarinds,

the beautiful city lay at the foot of the Cascade Mountains, its marble quays gently caressed by the waves of the Pacific. The carefully watered roads, freshened by the breeze, presented a cheerful and animated spectacle. The trees which shaded them rustled softly. The velvet lawns were fresh and green.

Not in the center of the town, but on the shores of the Pacific, had Dr. Sarrasin built his house. It had been among the first put up, and he had come immediately and established himself there with his wife and daughter Jeannette.

Octavius, the extempore millionaire, had remained in Paris; but he had no longer Max for a mentor. The two friends had almost lost sight of each other since the time when they lived together in King of Sicily Street.

When the doctor emigrated with his wife and daughter to the coast of Oregon, Otto was his own master. He soon neglected college, where his father had wished him to continue his studies, and was in consequence plucked in the final examination, when his friend Max came out first.

Till then, poor Otto, who was incapable of managing for himself, had had Max for a guide. When the young Alsacian left, his companion directly began to see life in Paris. He passed the greater part of his time on the box of a four-in-hand coach, driving perpetually between the avenue Marigny, where he had rooms, and the various race-courses of the suburbs.

Otto Sarrasin, who, three months before, could scarcely manage to stick on a horse hired by the hour, had suddenly become deeply versed in the mysteries of hippology. His erudition was borrowed from an English groom who had entered his service, and who ruled him entirely, in consequence of the superiority of his special knowledge.

Interviews with tailors, saddlers, and bootmakers, occupied the mornings. His evenings were spent at the theaters and in the rooms of a flaming new club, just opened at the corner of Trouchet Street, and chosen by Otto because the people he met there paid to his money a homage which his personal merits had not hitherto received.

In this new life the ties which bound Otto to Max Bruckmann were soon loosened. At last, the two chums only exchanged letters at long intervals. What could there be

in common between the eager, hard-working man, solely occupied with bringing his intellect to the highest point of culture and strength, and the idle youth, puffed up with his riches, his thoughts only filled with club and stable gossip? We know how Max left Paris, first to keep a watch on Herr Schultz, who had just founded Steeltown, the rival to Frankville, and then actually to enter the service of the King of Steel.

For two years Otto led his useless and dissipated life. Then a weariness of these hollow and worthless pleasures seized him, and one fine day, after having wasted some millions of francs, he rejoined his father, thus escaping from moral and physical ruin. At the present time he was living in the doctor's house in Frankville.

His sister Jeannette was now a lovely girl of nineteen, to whose French grace her four years' stay in the new country had added all the good American qualities. Her mother said sometimes that before having her so completely to herself, she had never felt the charm of perfect intimacy. As to Madame Sarrasin, since the return of her prodigal son, the child of her hopes, she was as completely happy as any one can be here below, for she associated herself with all the good her husband could and did do with his immense fortune.

On the evening of which we have spoken, Dr. Sarrasin had invited to dinner two of his most intimate friends, Colonel Hendon, an old hero of the War of Secession, who had left an arm at Pittsburg and an ear at Sevenoaks, but who could hold his own with any one at a game of chess; and Monsieur Lentz, General Director of Instruction in the new city. The conversation turned on the plans for the administration of the town, the results already obtained in the public establishments of all sorts, institutions, hospitals, mutual aid societies.

M. Lentz, according to the doctor's program, in which religious teaching was not forgotten, had founded several elementary schools, where the cares of the master tended to develop the mind of the child by submitting it to a sort of intellectual gymnastic exercise, adjusted so as to follow the natural bent of its faculties. It was taught to love a science before being crammed with it, avoiding that knowledge which, says Montaigne, "floats on the surface of the

brain," without penetrating the understanding, or rendering its possessor either wiser or better.

Frankville had now reached the highest degree of intellectual as well as temporal prosperity. In its congress were collected all the illustrious and learned men of the two worlds. Artists, painters, sculptors, musicians, attracted by the reputation of this city, crowded to it. All the young people of Frankville, who promised some day to illuminate this corner of America, studied under these masters. This new Athens of French origin was on the way to become the first of cities. A good military as well as civil education was given in the colleges. All the young men were taught the use of firearms, as well as the first principles of strategy and tactics.

When this became the subject of conversation, Colonel Hendon declared himself delighted with all his recruits. "They are," said he, "already accustomed to forced marches, fatigue, and all kinds of manly exercises. Our army is composed of citizens, and when the time comes they will be found disciplined and trustworthy soldiers."

Frankville was on the best terms with all the neighboring States, for she had seized every occasion to oblige them; but ingratitude speaks so loudly when people's own interests are in question, that the doctor and his friends resolved not to lose sight of the maxim: "Heaven helps those who help themselves."

Dinner was over, the dessert was on the table, and, according to the usual custom, the ladies had just left the room. Dr. Sarrasin, Otto, Colonel Hendon, and M. Lentz continued the conversation, and were attacking the higher questions of political economy, when a servant entered and handed the doctor his paper.

It was the *New York Herald*. This respectable journal had always shown itself extremely favorable, first to the foundation, and then to the development of Frankville, and the principals of the city were accustomed to look in its columns for the possible variations of public opinion with regard to them in the United States. This agglomeration of happy, free, and independent people on their little neutral territory was envied by not a few, and if Frankville had many friends in America to defend her, she had also enemies who delighted in attacking her. At any rate, the

New York Herald was on their side, and constantly expressed itself in terms of admiration and esteem.

Without interrupting himself in what he was saying, Dr. Sarrasin opened the paper, mechanically casting his eyes on the first paragraph. Suddenly he stopped, confounded, as he saw the following lines, which he read to himself, and then aloud, to the great surprise and greater indignation of his friends:

"New York, September 8th.—A violent attempt against the rights of men is shortly to take place. We learn from a certain source that formidable preparations are being made at Steeltown, with the object of attacking and destroying Frankville, the city of French origin. We do not know if the United States can or ought to interfere in this struggle, which will set the Latin and Saxon races by the ears; but, in common with all honest men, we denounce this odious abuse of strength. Frankville should not lose an hour in putting herself in a state of defense, etc."

CHAPTER XII

THE COUNCIL

The hatred which the King of Steel bore to Dr. Sarrasin's work was no secret. Every one knew that his was a rival city. But no one would have believed him capable of attacking a peaceful town, and endeavoring to destroy it at a blow. The article in the *New York Herald* was, however, positive on the point. The correspondents of that journal had penetrated Herr Schultz's designs, and, as they said, there was not an hour to spare!

The worthy doctor was confounded. Like all honest-hearted men, he refused as long as he could to believe in the evil designs of others. It seemed to him impossible that a human being could be so wicked as to wish to destroy without sufficient reason, and from simple malice, a city, which was in a certain sense the common property of mankind.

"Just think that our average mortality will this year be only one and a quarter in every hundred!" he exclaimed, naïvely; "that there is not a boy of ten years old who does not know how to read; that not a murder or theft has been

committed since the foundation of Frankville! And these barbarians want to destroy this successful experiment at its very beginning! No; I cannot believe that a chemist, a savant, were he a hundred times a German, could be capable of such atrocity!"

They were compelled, however, to trust to the evidence of a paper thoroughly devoted to their undertaking, and act without delay. The first moment of dismay passed, Dr. Sarrasin regaining the command of his feelings, thus addressed his friends, "Gentlemen, you are members of the Civic Council, and it is your duty as well as mine to take all necessary measures for the safety of the town. What ought we to do first?"

"Is there no possibility of arranging matters?" said M. Lentz. "Can we not honorably avoid war?"

"That is impossible," replied Otto. "Herr Schultz evidently will have it at any price. His hate will not allow him to come to terms!"

"Very well!" exclaimed the doctor; "we shall be ready to receive him. Do you think, colonel, that anything can resist the cannons of Steeltown?"

"Any human force can be efficaciously combated by another human force," answered Colonel Hendon; "but we need not think of defending ourselves by the same means and the same arms which Herr Schultz will use to attack us. The construction of engines of war, capable of opposing his, would take a long time to make, and I do not know, besides, if we should succeed in fabricating them, since we have not special workshops. I can only see one chance of safety, that of preventing the enemy from reaching us, and rendering an investment impossible."

"I will go immediately and convoke the Council," said Dr. Sarrasin; and he led his guests into his study.

It was a simply furnished room, three sides being covered with shelves, loaded with books, while the fourth presented, below several pictures and curiosities, a row of numbered openings, similar to ear-trumpets.

"Thanks to the telephone," said he, "we can hold a council in Frankville, while every one remains at home."

The doctor touched a warning-bell, which instantaneously communicated with the houses of all the members. In less than three minutes, the word "present" brought successively

by each wire, announced that the Council was sitting.

The doctor placed himself before the mouthpiece, rung the bell, and said—

"The meeting is open. My honorable friend, Colonel Hendon, will speak, to make a communication of the deepest importance."

The colonel, in his turn, placed himself before the telephone, and, after reading the article from the *New York Herald,* he proposed that immediate measures should be taken to impede the advance of the enemy.

He had scarcely concluded when number Six put the question—

"Does the colonel believe a defense possible, in case the means by which he hopes to prevent the enemy from reaching us does not succeed?"

Colonel Hendon replied in the affirmative. The question and answer instantaneously reached each invisible member of the Council, as well as the explanations which preceded them.

Number Seven asked how long in his estimation it would take for the people of Frankville to prepare.

The colonel could not say, but it would be advisable to act as if they were to be attacked in a fortnight.

Number Two: "Should we await the attack, or would you think it preferable to prevent it?"

"We must do all in our power to prevent it," answered the colonel; "and if we are threatened with a fleet, we must blow up Herr Schultz's ships with torpedoes."

On this, Dr. Sarrasin offered to call into council the most distinguished chemists, as well as the most experienced artillery officers, and give to them the task of examining the plans which Colonel Hendon had ready to submit to them.

Question from Number One—

"What is the sum necessary for the immediate commencement of the works of defense?"

"We should have at our disposal from fifteen to twenty millions of dollars."

"I propose that the Citizens' Assembly be instantly convoked."

President Sarrasin: "I will put it to the vote."

The bells in each telephone rang twice, announcing that the proposal was unanimously adopted.

It was half-past eight. The Council had only lasted eighteen minutes, and had not disturbed any one.

The popular assembly was convoked by means as simple, and almost as expeditious. Dr. Sarrasin communicated by telephone the vote of the Council to the Town Hall. An electric peal was instantly set in motion at the summit of each of the columns in every square of the city. The columns were surmounted by luminous dial plates, on which the hands, moved by electricity, pointed to half-past eight, the hour for the assembly.

This clamorous call, continuing for a quarter of an hour, brought all the inhabitants out of their houses, they glanced up at the nearest dial, and ascertaining that some national duty required their presence at the Town Hall, they hastened thither as fast as possible.

In less than forty-five minutes the Assembly was complete. Dr. Sarrasin was already in the place of honor, surrounded by the Council, while Colonel Hendon waited at the foot of the tribune, until permission was given him to speak.

The greater number of the citizens already knew the reason of the meeting being called. In fact, the discussion of the Civic Council, automatically, stereographed by the Town Hall telephone, had been immediately sent to the papers, printed in a special edition, and placarded all over the town.

The municipal hall was an immense building, roofed with glass, and brilliantly lighted by gas. The crowd which filled it was calm and orderly, every one standing. All the faces were cheerful. Perfect health, an active and regular life, and a quiet conscience, placed them above any unruly passion of alarm or anger.

At exactly half-past eight, the president rang his bell, and silence fell on the assembly. The colonel ascended the tribune. There, in sober, but forcible language, without useless ornament or oratorical pretensions—the language of a man, who, knowing what he is talking about, clearly expresses himself—Colonel Hendon related the inveterate hate which Herr Schultz bore against Frankville, Dr. Sarrasin, and his work, and the formidable preparations announced by the *New York Herald,* destined to destroy their city and its inhabitants.

"It is for you to decide what is best to be done," he continued. "Some people, possessing neither courage nor patriotism, might perhaps prefer to give up the land, and leave the aggressors to do what they wish with their new home. But I am certain beforehand that such a pusillanimous proposal would find no echo among my fellow-citizens. Men who are able to understand the greatness of the object aimed at by the founders of the model city, men who have accepted its laws, are necessarily men of heart and intelligence. Sincere representatives of progress, you will do everything to save our incomparable town, the glorious monument raised by science, to ameliorate the fallen condition of man! Your duty, therefore, is to give your lives for the cause you represent."

Thunders of applause greeted this peroration. Several speakers supported Colonel Hendon's motion.

Dr. Sarrasin, having impressed the necessity of constituting a Committee of Defence, which was to take immediate measures, with all the secrecy indispensable in military operations, the proposal was adopted.

A member of the Civic Council then suggested that five million dollars should be voted for the works. A show of hands ratified this measure.

At five-and-twenty minutes past ten the meeting was over, and the citizens of Frankville were about to leave the hall, when an unexpected incident occurred. The empty tribune was suddenly occupied by a stranger of most curious appearance. He had sprung up as if by magic. His face showed that he was laboring under frightful excitement; but his attitude was calm and resolute. His torn and muddy clothes, his bleeding forehead, told of something extraordinary.

At sight of him every one paused. With an imperative gesture, the stranger commanded silence.

Who was he? Whence had he come? No one, not even Dr. Sarrasin, ventured to ask him.

"I have just escaped from Steeltown," he said. "Herr Schultz had condemned me to death. God has allowed me to reach you in time to attempt to save you. I am not unknown to you all. My venerated master, Dr. Sarrasin, can tell you, I hope, that in spite of my appearance, rendering me unrecognizable even to him,

some confidence may be placed in Max Bruckmann!"

"Max!" exclaimed both the doctor and Otto at once, starting toward him.

He stopped them by a sign. Max had been, indeed, miraculously saved. After forcing the grating, just as he was almost suffocated, the current swept him onward, and two minutes later threw him on the bank, outside Steeltown, indeed, but almost lifeless.

For several hours the brave young fellow lay stretched motionless in the darkness, far from all help, on the lonely desert. When consciousness returned, it was daylight. He thanked God that he had escaped from that horrible Steeltown! He was no longer a prisoner. The next moment his thoughts were concentrated on Dr. Sarrasin, his friends, and fellow citizens.

"I must save them!" he repeated.

By a supreme effort he got upon his feet. He was thirty miles from Frankville, and he had thirty miles to traverse on foot, for there was no railway in that direction, not even a cart or a horse to be got, for the whole country round the terrible Steel City was shunned. He pressed on, however, without taking a moment's rest, and at a quarter-past ten arrived at the city.

The placards which covered the walls told him all. He found that the inhabitants had been warned of the threatened danger; but they were not aware of its frightful nature, or that it was immediate.

The catastrophe premeditated by Herr Schultz, was to take place on this very evening, at a quarter to twelve. It was now a quarter-past ten.

Max had not a moment to lose, he sped through the town, and at twenty-five minutes past ten, as the assembly was about to break up, he scaled the tribune.

"Not in a month, my friends," he cried, "not even in a week, must you expect the danger! But in an hour, this awful catastrophe, a rain of iron and fire, will burst upon your town. An engine, worthy the invention of a fiend, which will carry thirty miles, is at this very moment pointed against us. I have seen it. Let the women and children seek shelter in the deepest and strongest cellars, or let them instantly leave the town, and take refuge in the mountains. All the men must prepare to combat the fire by

every possible means. Fire will for the time be your only enemy. Neither armies nor soldiers will march against you. The adversary who menaces you disdains all ordinary modes of attack. If the plans and calculations of a man, whose power for evil is well known to you, are realized —unless Herr Schultz is mistaken for the first time in his life—fire will suddenly break out in at least a hundred places all over Frankville. We shall presently have to face the flames at a hundred different points! Whatever happens, the population must be saved first; such of your houses and monuments which cannot be preserved, or even the whole town, time and money can restore!"

In Europe, Max would have been thought mad. But in America it is not wise to refuse to believe in any miracle of science, however unexpected; so, by Dr. Sarrasin's advice, the young engineer was listened to and believed in.

The crowd, awed as much by the accent and appearance of the speaker as by his words, obeyed, without even dreaming of disputing his commands. The doctor answered for Max Bruckmann, and that was enough.

Orders were immediately given, and messengers sent out in every direction. As to the inhabitants, some withdrew to the cellars of their dwellings, resigned to suffer all the horrors of a bombardment, others on foot, horseback, or in carriages, hastened out into the country, and ascended the steeps of the Cascade Mountains. In the meantime the able-bodied men collected in the square, and in different places pointed out by the doctor, everything that would serve to subdue fire, that is to say, water, earth, and sand.

In the Hall the deliberation continued. Max was evidently beset by some idea which filled his brain to the exclusion of every other thought. He muttered to himself, "At a quarter to twelve! Is it really possible that that villainous Schultz will destroy us with his execrable invention?"

Suddenly Max drew out his pocketbook. He made a gesture requiring silence, and then, pencil in hand, rapidly put down several figures on one of the pages. As he did so his brow cleared, his face became radiant.

"Ah! my friends!" he exclaimed, "my friends! Either these figures are liars, or else all that we fear will vanish like a nightmare before the evidence of a problem in the

science of projectiles, the solution of which I have till this moment sought in vain. Herr Schultz is mistaken! The threatened danger is but a dream. For once, his science is at fault! Nothing of what he foretold will come to pass. It's impossible! His formidable shell will fly over Frankville without touching it, and if there is anything to fear, it will be only in the future!"

What could Max mean? His friends did not understand!

The young Alsacian then explained the result of his calculations. In his clear ringing voice he explained his demonstration in such a way as to render it luminous, even to the most ignorant. It was light succeeding darkness, calm following agony. Not only would the projectile leave untouched the doctor's city, but it would touch nothing whatever. It was destined to lose itself in space!

Dr. Sarrasin acknowledged the correctness of Max's calculations, and then, pointing to the luminous dial in the hall, "In three minutes," he exclaimed, "we shall know whether Schultz or Max Bruckmann is right! Whatever happens, my friends, we need not regret any of the precautions we have taken, and we still must neglect nothing which can baffle the inventions of our enemy. If his design fails for the present, as Max has just given us reason to hope, it won't be the last. Schultz's hate will never be stifled or arrested."

"Come!" exclaimed Max.

All followed him into the square. Three minutes passed in breathless suspense. The quarter before twelve was tolled forth from the great clock!

Four seconds after, a dark mass was seen high above their heads; quick as thought it rushed onward, and with a sinister hiss soon disappeared far beyond the town.

"A pleasant journey to it!" shouted Max, with a burst of laughter. "If Herr Schultz's shell keeps up that speed, it will never again fall upon terrestrial soil!"

In two minutes a roar was heard like distant thunder. This was the report of the cannon in the Bull Tower, the sound reaching Frankville a hundred and thirteen seconds after the projectile had passed at the rate of four hundred and fifty miles an hour.

CHAPTER XIII

NEWS FOR THE PROFESSOR

"Max Bruckmann, to Professor Schultz, of Steeltown.

"FRANKVILLE, September 14th.

"I CONSIDER it proper to inform the King of Steel, that on the evening of the day before yesterday, I succeeded in passing beyond the frontier of his dominion, preferring my own safety to that of the model in the blazing workshop.

"While taking leave, I should fail in my bounden duty were I not in turn to reveal my secrets. Do not, however, be uneasy on that account, I shall not require you to pay for the knowledge with your life.

"My real name is not Schwartz, and I am not a Swiss. Alsace is my country, and I am called Max Bruckmann. I am a tolerable engineer, if one may take your word for it; but first and foremost, I am a Frenchman. You have shown yourself the implacable enemy of my country, my friends, and my family. You have entertained odious designs against everything I hold most dear. I have dared, and done all, in order to discover those designs; I will dare and do all to frustrate them.

"I hasten to let you know that your first shot has failed to take effect. It has not hit the mark, for, thank heaven, it could not. Your gun is not the less a wonderful one, though the projectiles which it sends forth will never do any harm to any one! They will fall nowhere. I had a presentiment of this, and, to your great glory, it is now an established fact, that Herr Schultz has invented a wonderful cannon, entirely inoffensive.

"You will hear with pleasure that we saw your perfect shell, at forty-five minutes and four seconds past eleven, pass above our town. It was flying toward the west, circulating in space, which it will continue to do until the end of time. A projectile, animated with an initial speed twenty times superior to the actual speed, being ten thousand yards to the second, can never fall! This movement, combined with terrestrial attraction, destines it to revolve perpetually round our globe.

"You ought to have been aware of this.

"I hope and expect that the cannon in the Bull Tower

is quite spoiled by this first trial; but two hundred thousand dollars is not too much to have paid for the pleasure of having endowed the planetary world with a new star, and the earth with a second satellite.

"MAX BRUCKMANN."

An express was immediately sent from Frankville to Steeltown with this letter; and Max must be forgiven for not having been able to resist the satisfaction of writing it to Herr Schultz.

Max was quite right when he said that the famous shell would never again fall on the surface of the earth, and also right when he predicted the cannon of the Bull Tower would be rendered useless by the enormous charge of pyroxile.

The receipt of this letter greatly discomfited Herr Schultz, and was a terrible shock to his self-love. As he read it, he turned perfectly livid, and his head fell on his breast as if he had been struck with a club. He remained in this state of prostration for a quarter of an hour. When he revived his rage was frightful. Arminius and Sigimer alone witnessed the outbursts! However, Herr Schultz was not a man to acknowledge himself beaten.

Henceforth the struggle between him and Max would continue to the death. He still had other shells charged with liquid carbonic acid, which less powerful, but more practical guns, could throw to a short distance.

Calming himself by an effort, the King of Steel re-entered his study, and continued his work.

It was clear that Frankville, now more than ever menaced with danger, must neglect nothing by which it could be put into a perfect state of defense.

CHAPTER XIV

CLEARING FOR ACTION

ALTHOUGH the danger was no longer imminent, it was serious. Max communicated to Dr. Sarrasin and his friends all that he knew of Herr Schultz's preparations, and described his engines of destruction. On the next day the Council of Defence, in which he took a principal part, occupied itself with discussing a plan of resistance, and

preparing to put it into execution. In all this Max was well seconded by Otto, whom he found altered in character, and much improved.

No one knew the details of the resolutions passed. The general principles alone were regularly communicated to the press. It was not difficult to trace in them the practical hand of Max.

"In preparing for defense," said the townsfolk, "the great thing is to know the strength of the enemy, and adapt the system of resistance to that strength. No doubt, Herr Schultz's cannon are formidable, but it is better to have to face these guns, of which we know the number, caliber, range, and effect, than to have to combat unknown engines."

It was decided to prevent the investment of the town, either by land or sea. How this was best to be done was a question actively discussed by the Council, and the day on which a placard announced that this problem was solved, no one doubted it. The citizens hastened *en masse* to execute the undertaking. No tasks were despised which could contribute to the work of defense. Men of all ages, and of every position in life, became simple laborers on this occasion, and everything went on rapidly and cheerfully.

Max was indefatigable in all this. He was here, there, and everywhere in the thick of all the work. Did some theoretical or practical difficulty arise, he could immediately solve it. If necessary, he turned up his sleeves and gave a practical definition. His authority was always accepted without a murmur, and his orders punctually attended to.

Next to him, Otto did his best. Although at first he had thought of ornamenting his uniform with gold lace, he soon gave up the idea, seeing that to set a good example to others he must be content to do the duty of a simple soldier.

He, therefore, took his place in the battalion assigned to him, and conducted himself like a model soldier. To those who at first attempted to pity him, he replied, "Every one according to his merits. Perhaps I should not have been able to command! The least I can do is to learn to obey!"

A report—which turned out to be false—gave a still more lively impulse to the works of defense. Herr Schultz, it was said, was negotiating with some maritime company

for the transport of his cannon. From that time these sort of hoaxes were the order of the day. Now it was that the Schultz fleet was off the coast of Frankville, and now that the Sacramento Railway had been cut by Uhlans, who had apparently dropped from the clouds.

But all these rumors, which were immediately contradicted, were invented by the correspondents of newspapers, hard up for matter to fill their despatches, their object being to sustain the curiosity of their readers. The truth was that Steeltown did not give the least sign of life.

This perfect quietude, although it left Max ample time to complete his preparations, caused him a good deal of uneasiness in his rare moments of leisure.

"Is it possible that the ruffian has changed his tactics, and is preparing some new mode of attack?" he thought.

However, the plans for checking the advance of the enemy's ships, and preventing the investment of the town, promised to answer well, and Max redoubled his exertions.

His sole pleasure and only rest, after a hard day's work, was the short hour which he passed every evening in Madame Sarrasin's drawing-room. From the first, the doctor had stipulated that he should always come and dine at his house, unless he was prevented by another engagement; but, by some singular circumstance, no other invitation enticing enough to make Max give up this privilege had as yet presented itself.

The everlasting game of chess between the doctor and Colonel Hendon could not have been sufficiently interesting to explain the punctuality with which he presented himself every day at the door of the mansion. We are therefore compelled to believe that there was another attraction for Max, and we might, perhaps, have suspected its nature, although, assuredly, he did not as yet suspect it himself, had we observed the interest which he took in the conversations between himself, Madame Sarrasin, and Mademoiselle Jeannette, when they were all three seated near the large table, at which the two ladies were working at what might be necessary for future service in the ambulances.

"Will these new steel bolts be better than those of which you showed us a drawing?" asked Jeannette, who was interested in everything connected with the defense.

"No doubt about it, mademoiselle," replied Max.

"Ah, I am very glad of that! But how much trouble and research is represented by the smallest industrial particular. You told me that five hundred fresh yards of the trench were dug yesterday? That is a great deal, is it not?"

"Indeed, no, it is not nearly enough. At that rate we shall not have finished the enclosure at the end of a month."

"I should much like to see it done, and these horrible Schultz people arriving! Men are very fortunate in being able to work and make themselves useful. Waiting is never so trying for them as for us, who are of no use."

"Of no use!" exclaimed Max, usually so calm, "no use! And for whom do you think do these brave men, who have left everything to become soldiers, for whom do they work, if not to secure the safety and happiness of their mothers, their wives, and those whom they hope may become their wives? From whence comes their ardor, if not from you, and to what would you trace this readiness to sacrifice themselves, if not——"

Here Max got rather confused, and stopped. Mademoiselle Jeannette did not urge him, and good Madame Sarrasin herself was obliged to close the discussion by saying to the young man that a love of duty was doubtless sufficient to explain the zeal of the greater number.

And when Max, at the call of inexorable duty, tore himself away from this pleasant talk, in order to finish a plan, or an estimate, he carried with him the invincible determination to save Frankville and its inhabitants.

Little could he conjecture what was about to happen, and yet it was but the inevitable result of a state of things so utterly unnatural as this concentration of all power in a single person, which was the fundamental principle in the City of Steel.

CHAPTER XV

THE EXCHANGE OF SAN FRANCISCO

THE Exchange of San Francisco, by which term is expressed, as it were algebraically, immense industrial and commercial business, presents one of the strangest and most animated scenes in the world.

The geographical position of the capital of California imparts to its Exchange, as a natural consequence, the cosmopolitan character, which is one of its most remarkable features. Beneath its handsome red granite porticoes, the tall, fair Saxon jostles the slight, active dark-haired Celt. The negro meets the Finlander and the Hindoo. The Polynesian gazes with astonishment at the Greenlander. The Chinaman, with oblique eyes and pigtail, endeavors to outdo in trade his historic enemy, the Japanese.

On the 12th of October this place of business opened in the usual way. At about eleven o'clock the principal brokers and men of business began to arrive, accost one another gravely or gayly, according to their several tempers, shaking hands, and going together to the refreshment bar to fortify themselves by "liquoring up" for the operations of the day. One after the other went to open the little metal door of the numbered letter-boxes, which in the vestibule received the correspondence of subscribers. Enormous packets of letters were drawn forth, and eagerly examined.

In a short time the market prices for the day were announced, when the crowd gradually increased. Groups more or less numerous were formed, from among which arose a murmur and hum of human voices.

Then commenced a shower of telegraphic messages from all quarters of the globe. Scarcely a minute passed that the officials of the Exchange did not add a fresh strip of blue paper to the collection of telegrams placarded on the north wall, which was read forth in a stentorian voice, amid the now deafening buzz.

The commotion and hubbub went on increasing. Clerks rushed in and out; the telegraph office was besieged; messages sent out, answers received every instant.

At about one o'clock a contagious excitement appeared to take possession of the crowd. A mysterious sensation passed like the trembling of an earthquake through these agitated groups of human beings. A piece of news, startling and incredible, had been brought by the Bank of the Far West, and it circulated with the rapidity of an electric flash. Exclamations and comments were heard on all sides.

"Impossible! It's a trick—a hoax," said some. "Who is likely to believe anything so preposterous?"

"Well," said others, "there may be something in it. No smoke without fire, you know."

"But is a man in his position likely to fail?"

"People in apparently the very best positions fail."

"But, sir," cried one, "the fixtures, tools and engines alone represent more than eighty million dollars!"

"Without reckoning the cast iron and steel, raw material, and manufactured articles!" added another.

"To be sure! That's just what I say, too! Schultz is good for ninety millions of dollars, and I'll undertake to be answerable for that on his demand!"

"Well, but then how do you explain this suspension of payment?"

"Explain! I don't explain it! I don't believe it!"

"Don't you? As if such things did not happen every day to houses of the most firm and established reputations!"

"Steeltown is not a house; it is a city."

"Of course! It is perfectly impossible it can have broken up so completely. A company will certainly be formed to carry on the business."

"But why on earth did not Schultz form such a company instead of declaring himself bankrupt?"

"Exactly, sir; and there's the absurdity! So absurd that the statement won't bear examination. It is neither more nor less than a pure fabrication, probably invented by Nash, who is desperately anxious for a rise in steel."

"A fabrication? False intelligence? Nothing of the sort! Schultz has not only failed; he has absconded!"

"Come! Come!"

"Absconded, sir! The telegram announcing it has this moment been posted up!"

A formidable wave of humanity rolled toward the frame in which the despatches were placarded. The last strip of blue paper bore these words: "New York, 12.40.—Central Bank. Manufactory of Steeltown. Stopped payment. Liabilities, as far as known: forty-seven million. Schultz has disappeared."

There was now no doubt about the truth of the astounding intelligence; and conjectures and rumors were rife.

By two o'clock lists of failures consequent upon that of Schultz began to pour in. The Mining Bank of New York lost most. The firm of Westerly and Son at Chicago

was implicated to the extent of seven million dollars. The house of the Mitwaukees of Buffalo, five millions. The Industrial Bank of San Francisco, a million and a half. The names of numbers of minor firms followed with proportionate losses. But, without waiting for this news, came the natural rebound. The money market, which was so dull in the morning, was now not steady for two hours together. What starts! what rises! what fluctuations, what unrestrained speculation!

A rise in steel, and going up every minute; a rise in coal; a rise in the shares of all the foundries in the American Union; a rise in the products of every kind of iron industry; a rise in Frankville land. Although on the declaration of war the latter had fallen to zero, and disappeared from the list of quotations, it had now suddenly risen to a hundred and eighty dollars an acre.

In the evening the newspaper shops were perfectly besieged. But though the *Herald,* the *Tribune,* the *Alta,* the *Guardian,* the *Echo,* and the *Globe* printed in gigantic characters the meager information they had been able to collect, it after all amounted to very little.

All that was known was, that on the 25th of September, a draft for eight millions of dollars, accepted by Herr Schultz, drawn by Jackson, Elder and Co., of Buffalo, having been presented to Schring, Strauss and Co., the King of Steel's bankers, in New York, those gentlemen had stated that the balance to their client's account was insufficient for such an enormous sum, and had telegraphed this to him, without receiving any answer.

On referring to their books, they perceived with consternation that for thirteen days no letter and no bills had come from Steeltown. From that moment drafts and checks, drawn by Herr Schultz on their bank, came in daily, to undergo the fate of being returned with the words, no funds. For four days inquiries, telegrams, and furious questions rained from one side on the bank and then again on Steeltown.

At last a decisive reply was given. "Herr Schultz disappeared on the 17th of September," so said the telegram. "No one can throw the least light on this mystery. He has left no orders, and the coffers in every section are empty."

Since then it had been no longer possible to conceal the truth. Many of the principal creditors had taken fright and sent in their claims to the commercial court. Ruin spread rapidly in all directions. At twelve o'clock, on the 13th of October, the total amount of failures was estimated at forty-seven millions of dollars. When everything became known it was likely to amount to sixty millions.

This was all that could be said, and all that the journals, with a few exceptions, could report. Of course they announced for the next day full and special particulars, "as yet unpublished." And, indeed, to do them justice, each, within an hour of the first announcement, had despatched a correspondent on the road to Steeltown.

By the evening of the 14th of October, Steel City was besieged by an army of reporters, all with pencils in hand. Like a wave, however, they broke against the outer wall, for the sentries were in their places, and any attempt to bribe or soften them was utterly in vain.

They, nevertheless, ascertained that the workmen as yet knew nothing, and that the routine of the sections in nothing had been changed. The overseers had merely announced the day before by superior order, that no funds nor instructions had been issued from the Central Block, and that in consequence the works would be suspended the following Saturday, unless contrary orders were received.

All this only complicated, instead of throwing any light on the situation. That Herr Schultz had disappeared for nearly a month, of that there was no doubt. But what might be the cause and import of this disappearance no one knew. A vague impression that the mysterious personage might at any moment reappear still prevailed, and seemed to lessen the general uneasiness.

For some days all work had gone on as usual. Every one had pursued his task within the limited horizon of his section. The salaries were paid from the strong boxes every Saturday, and the principal coffer had met all local necessities. But centralization had been brought to too high a pitch of perfection in Steeltown; the master had reserved so absolutely to himself the superintendence of everything, that his absence could not fail in a very short time to cause a stoppage in the machinery. Thus, from the 17th of September, the day on which the King of

Steel had signed his orders for the last time up to the 13th of October, when the news of the suspension of payment had burst like a thunder-clap, millions of letters, a large number containing considerable bills, passed through the Steeltown Post Office, had been deposited in the box of the Central Block, and no doubt had reached Herr Schultz's study. But he alone had the right to open them, mark them with a red pencil, and transmit them to the principal cashier.

Even the highest functionaries in the town never dreamt of doing anything out of their regular department.

Invested with almost absolute power over their subordinates, they were each, in connection with Herr Schultz—as they were also with his memory—like so many instruments, without authority, without power of initiating, or a voice in any matter. Each fortified himself within the narrow limits of his commission, waited, temporized, and watched the course of events.

The end came at last. This remarkable state of affairs was prolonged until the principal houses interested, suddenly seized with a panic, telegraphed, begged for an answer, entreated, protested, and finally commenced legal proceedings. This took some time. No one was willing hastily to suspect that prosperity, so firmly believed in, had been resting on an insecure basis. But the fact was now patent: Herr Schultz had fled from his creditors.

This was all that the reporters could gather. The celebrated Meikeljohn himself, famous for having extracted a political avowal from President Grant, the most taciturn man of his time; the indefatigable Blunderbuss, remarkable for being the first, although but a simple correspondent of *The World,* to announce to the Czar the news of the capitulation of Plevna, even these great men in the reporting line had not this time been more fortunate than their brethren. They were forced to confess to themselves that *The Tribune* and *The World* could not yet give the latest news of the bankrupt Schultz.

That Steeltown was indeed in a strange situation will be seen when it is remembered that it was an independent and isolated town, permitting no regular and legal inquiry. Herr Schultz's signature was, it is true, protested at New York, and his creditors had every reason to believe that the stock and manufactory would indemnify them in some

degree. But to what court should they apply to obtain an execution or a sequestration? Steeltown lay in a territory of its own, where everything belonged to Herr Schultz.

If only he had left a representative, an administrative council, or a substitute. But there was nothing of the sort. He himself was king, judge, general-in-chief, notary, lawyer, and the only commercial court in the city. In his person he had realized the ideal of centralization.

Therefore, he being absent, there was absolutely no one in power, and the whole fabric fell like a house of cards.

In any other situation, the creditors would have been able to form a syndicate, substituting themselves for Herr Schultz, lay hands on the stock, and take the direction of affairs. To all appearance only a little money and regulating power was needed to set the machine to work.

But nothing of this was possible. The proper legal instrument to effect this substitution was wanting. There was a moral barrier round the City of Steel, which was if possible, more insurmountable than its walls. The unfortunate creditors could see the securities for their debts, though quite unable to touch them.

All they could do was to unite in a general assembly, and agree to address a request to Congress to ask it to take their case in hand, espouse the interests of its natives, pronounce the annexation of Steeltown to American territory, and thus include this monstrous creation in the common laws of civilization. Several members of the Congress were personally interested in the business, the request was tempting to the American character, and there was reason to believe that it would be crowned with complete success. Unfortunately Congress was not then in session, so that a long delay was to be feared before the matter could be submitted to it.

Until that time nothing could be done in Steeltown, and one by one the furnaces were extinguished. The consternation among the population of ten thousand families who lived by the manufactory was profound. But what were they to do? Continue to work in hopes of wages, which might be six months in coming, or might never come at all? No one was inclined to adopt this opinion. Besides, what work could they do? The source from which orders came was dried up as well as everything else. All Herr

Schultz's clients waited the legal solution. The heads of the sections, engineers, and overseers, could do nothing for want of orders.

Numberless assemblies, meetings, and debates took place, though no plan could really be fixed on. The enforced stoppage soon brought with it a train of misery, despair, and vice. As the workshops emptied, the public-houses filled. For each chimney which ceased to smoke in the factory, a tavern sprung up in one of the neighboring villages.

The wisest and most prudent among the workmen, those who had foreseen hard times, and had laid by for a rainy day, hastened to escape with bag and baggage; and happy rosy-cheeked children, wild with delight at the new world revealed to them, peeped through the curtains of the departing wagons, loaded with their father's tools and furniture, and the precious bedding, dear to the heart of the housewife. These all were scattered east, south, and north, soon finding other factories, other anvils, other hearthstones.

But for one who could thus depart, there were ten whose poverty nailed them to the soil! There they remained, hollow-eyed and broken-hearted! Selling their poor garments to the flock of birds-of-prey in human shape, whose instinct attracts them to scenes of great disasters, reduced to the last extremities in a few days, deprived of credit as well as of wages, of hope as well as work, and seeing before them a future of misery as black and dismal as the fast approaching winter!

CHAPTER XVI

A BRACE OF FRENCHMEN CAPTURE A TOWN

When tidings of the disappearance of Schultz reached Frankville, Max's first words were, "Suppose it should be merely a trick!"

He reflected, however, that the results to Steeltown had been so disastrous as to make such an hypothesis inadmissible. Still, as hatred is an unreasoning passion, the exasperated rage of such a man as Herr Schultz might really render him capable of sacrificing everything to it. Whether or not this was the case, it was undeniably necessary to be on the *qui vive*.

The Council of Defense issued a proclamation exhort-

ing the inhabitants to be on their guard against false reports spread by the enemy, with the object of lulling them into security. Frankville judged it prudent to continue all the preparations for defense, taking no notice of what might prove to be a stratagem of its arch-enemy.

But by and by the journals of San Francisco, Chicago, and New York published further details, and news of the financial and commercial consequences of the Steeltown catastrophy, forming altogether a mass of evidence to prove that Schultz was a genuine bankrupt, and had indeed disappeared. And so, one fine morning, the doctor's model city became aroused to the fact that it was safe, just as a sleeper escapes from the oppression of a horrible dream by the simple operation of awaking.

Everybody shook hands, offered mutual congratulations, and invited each other to dinner. All the women came out in fresh toilets, and the men took leave of drill, maneuvers, and hard work. Every one went about looking satisfied, and beaming. Frankville was just like a town peopled with convalescents. But among them all, the happiest was unquestionably Dr. Sarrasin.

This common danger had more closely united the citizens. All classes had been brought nearer to each other, and knew themselves brothers, animated with the same feelings, and affected by the same interests. A new sensation had sprung up in the hearts of all. Henceforward the inhabitants had a strong feeling of patriotism for Frankville. They had feared, they had suffered for their town, and now they knew how much they loved it. The material results of having placed it in a state of defense were also to the advantage of the city. Their strength was known. They felt more sure of themselves, and would now be ready for whatever the future might bring.

The prospects of Dr. Sarrasin's work had never appeared more brilliant; and, a rare thing, no ingratitude was shown toward Max. Although the safety of the population had not been his work, public thanks were voted to the young engineer, as to the organizer of the defense, the man to whose devotion the town would have owed its safety, had the plans of Herr Schultz succeeded.

Max, however, did not regard his part as finished. The mystery surrounding Steeltown might still, he thought, con-

ceal danger. He could not rest satisfied until he had thrown complete light into the very midst of the darkness which still enveloped the City of Steel. He resolved, therefore, to return to Steeltown, and to stop at nothing until he had probed the last secret to its depths.

Dr. Sarrasin represented to him that the enterprise would be difficult, that it would bristle with dangers, that he knew not what mines might spring beneath his feet, and that, in fact, it would resemble a descent into the lower regions. Herr Schultz, such as he had been described to him, was not a man to disappear with impunity to others, or to bury himself alone beneath the ruins of all his hopes. They had every reason to fear some last desperate design. It would be like the terrible dying agony of a shark!

"My dear doctor, it is just because I believe all you say, that I think it my duty to go to Steeltown," answered Max. "The place may be compared to a shell from which I must snatch the match before it bursts, and I will even ask your permission to take Otto with me."

"Otto!" exclaimed the doctor.

"Yes! He is now a fine fellow, who may be relied on; and I assure you that this excursion will do him a great deal of good!"

"May God protect you both!" returned the old man, fervently grasping his hand.

The next morning a carriage drove through the deserted villages and deposited Max and Otto at the gate of Steeltown. Both were well armed, and very determined not to come back until they had cleared up the mystery.

They walked side by side along the outer road which led round the fortifications, and the truth, which Max till then had persisted in doubting, now lay before them. It was evident that the place was completely deserted. From the lonely road, which he now trod with Otto, he could formerly have seen within the town flaring gas, or the flash of a sentinel's bayonet, and many other signs of life. The windows of the different sections would have been illuminated and dazzling. Now all was gloomy and silent. Death seemed to hover over the city, its tall chimneys standing up like skeletons. The footfalls of Max and his companion alone aroused the echoes of the place. The sensation of solitude and desolation was so strong that Otto could not help re-

IN THE ENEMY'S CITADEL.

Suddenly the firing ceased, and Otto distinctly heard a stifled cry of, "Help! help! I've got him!"

To leave his shelter, fly through the shrubbery, and spring in at the window, took Otto but a moment.

Struggling desperately on the floor, entwined like two serpents, were Max and Sigimer. Surprised by the sudden attack of his adversary, who had forced an inner door, the giant had been unable to use his weapons. But his herculean strength rendered him a formidable enemy, and although thrown to the ground, he had not lost hope of gaining the upper hand.—Page 119.

marking, "It is singular, but I have never felt silence similar to this! We might suppose ourselves in a cemetery!"

It was seven o'clock when Max and Otto reached the edge of the moat, opposite to the principal gate of Steeltown. Not a living creature appeared on the crest of the wall, and of the sentinels who formerly had stood at equal distances all round, like so many human posts, not one remained. The drawbridge was raised, leaving before the gate a gulf from five to six yards in width.

It took them more than an hour before they could succeed in fastening the end of a stout rope, by throwing it with all their might, so as to catch over one of the beams. After much trouble, Max managed it, and Otto going first, drew himself up hand over hand to the top of the gate. Max passed up to him their arms and ammunition, and then he himself took the same way. They carried their rope to the other side of the wall, let down all their impedimenta, and finally slid down themselves.

The two young men were now on the roundway which Max remembered having followed the first day he entered Steeltown. Complete silence and solitude were all around. Before them rose, black and dumb, the imposing mass of buildings which glared with their thousand glass windows at the intruders, as if to say, "Be off! You have no business to attempt the penetration of our secrets!"

Max and Otto consulted. "We will assail the O gate, as that is the one with which I am best acquainted," said Max.

They bent their steps westward, and soon arrived before the monumental arch, which bore on its front the letter O. The two massive oaken doors, full of great iron nails, were closed. Max approached, and struck them several times with a large stone taken from the road.

The echo alone resounded.

"Come! to work!" he cried to Otto.

They had now to recommence the troublesome work of throwing their rope over the door, until it met with some obstacle on which it would firmly catch. This was difficult, but they succeeded at last, and Max and Otto surmounted the wall, and found themselves in section O.

"What a nuisance!" exclaimed Otto, looking round; "where is the use of all our trouble? We have made but

little progress! No sooner have we got over one wall, than we find another before us!"

"Silence in the ranks!" returned Max. "Here we are in my old workshop. I am not sorry to see it again, that we may possess ourselves of certain tools which we shall be sure to need, not forgetting a few packets of dynamite."

As he spoke they entered the great casting-hall, to which the young Alsacian had been admitted on his arrival at the factory. How dismal it now looked, with its furnaces extinguished, its rails rusted, its dusty cranes extending their gaunt arms in the air, like so many gallows. All this struck a chill to the heart, and Max felt that some diversion to their ideas would be pleasant. "Here is a workshop will interest you more," he observed, leading the way to the canteen.

Otto followed obediently, and showed unmistakable signs of satisfaction as he caught sight of a whole regiment of red, yellow, and green bottles, drawn up in order of battle on a wooden shelf. Several boxes of preserved meats and other good things were also there; more than enough to furnish them with a substantial breakfast, the want of which they began to feel, so, having spread the food on the counter, the two young men fell to.

While eating, Max considered what was next to be done. There was no use in even thinking of scaling the wall of the Central Block, as it was prodigiously high, isolated from all the other buildings, and without a projection on which to fasten a rope. To find the door—of which there was probably only one—it would be necessary to go through all the sections, anything but an easy task. Dynamite could be used, though that was dangerous, for it seemed impossible that Herr Schultz should have disappeared without constructing traps in his deserted territory, or establishing counter mines to the mines which those who wished to take possession of Steeltown would not fail to form. But no fear of this could deter Max.

Seeing that Otto was now refreshed and rested, Max went with him to the end of the road which formed the axis of the section, up to the foot of the huge freestone wall.

"What say you to attempting a blast here?" he asked. "Shall we pierce the wall and lay a train of dynamite?"

"It will be hard work, but we are not afraid of that!" replied Otto, ready to attempt anything.

They first had to lay bare the foot of the wall, then introduce a lever between two stones, loosen one, and finally, with a drill, pierce several little parallel trenches. By ten o'clock all was prepared, the dynamite in its place, and the match lighted. Max knew that it would burn for five minutes, and as he had noticed that the canteen was underground, and was a regular stone-vaulted cellar, he took refuge there with Otto.

Suddenly every building, and even the cellar, were shaken as if by an earthquake. Then, almost immediately, a tremendous roar, resembling the sound of three or four batteries thundering at once, rent the air. In two or three seconds a perfect avalanche of stones and débris showered down far and wide. Then began an uproar of breaking roofs, crashing beams, falling walls, mingled with the sound of a cascade of broken glass.

When the frightful din had ceased, Max and Otto ventured forth from their retreat. Accustomed as he was to the terrific effects of an explosion, Max was astonished at the results of this one. Half of the section had been blown up, and the dismantled walls of all the neighboring workshops resembled those of a bombarded town. On all sides the ground was strewed with heaps of rubbish, and pieces of glass and plaster, while clouds of dust settling down, fell like snow on the ruins.

Otto and Max hastened to the inner wall. From fifteen to twenty feet of it had been thrown down, and on the other side of the breach, the ex-draughtsman of the Central Block could see the well-known hall, where he had passed so many monotonous hours.

As the place was no longer guarded, it was soon entered. Still the same silence everywhere. Max passed in review the studios, where formerly his comrades admired his diagrams. In one corner he discovered the very half-sketched drawing of a steam-engine on which he had been engaged when Herr Schultz summoned him to the park. In the reading-room lay the papers and familiar books. Everything bore the look of business suspended, of a sudden interruption to work.

The two friends had now reached the inner limits of the Central Block and stood before the wall, which Max believed divided them from the park. "Are we to make this fellow dance too?" asked Otto.

"Perhaps; but first we can look for a door, which a simple fusee could send flying."

They proceeded, therefore, to skirt the wall around the park, from time to time making a détour to avoid a building jutting out like a spur, or to climb a fence. But they never lost sight of it, and were soon rewarded for their trouble, by coming to a low, narrow door.

In two minutes Otto had bored a gimlet hole through the oaken panels, and Max, applying his eye to the opening, perceived with lively satisfaction that on the other side lay the tropical park, with its eternal verdure and summer temperature.

"One more door to blow up, and we shall be in the place!" he exclaimed to his companion.

"A fusee for a piece of wood like this would be too great an honor," returned Otto. And as he spoke he struck a heavy blow on the postern with an axe he carried.

It had not begun to give way, however, when they heard a key turned, and two bolts slipped back. The door half opened, though held inside by a thick chain.

"*Wer da?*" (Who goes there?) demanded a hoarse voice.

CHAPTER XVII

PARLEY BEFORE THE CITADEL

The two young men were little prepared for such a question. It astonished them more than if they had been met by a rifle shot.

Max had had a great many conjectures about this mysterious town, and the very last thing he had expected was that a living being would quietly demand the reason of his visit. His enterprise, legitimate enough, under the supposition that Steeltown was completely deserted, assumed quite another aspect, when the city was found still to be inhabited. That which in the one case was but a kind of archæological inquiry, in the other became an attack by force of arms, and bore the character of a burglary. These reflections rushed in upon the mind of Max with such force that he stood as if struck dumb.

"Who goes there?" repeated the voice, impatiently.

There was certainly some reason for impatience. For

intruders to have reached this door by overcoming so many obstacles, scaling walls, and blowing up half the town, and then to have nothing to say on being simply asked, "Who goes there?" was somewhat astonishing.

In half a minute Max became aware of the awkwardness of his position, and he replied in German, "Friend or enemy, whichever you like! I wish to speak to Herr Schultz."

Directly he uttered these words an exclamation was heard from the other side of the door, "*Ach!*" And through the opening Max could discern a red whisker, half a bristly mustache, and a dull eye, which he immediately recognized as belonging to Sigimer, one of the uncouth beings who had been ordered by Schultz to guard him.

"Johann Schwartz!" exclaimed the giant, with a sort of stupid joy, "Johann Schwartz!" The unexpected return of his prisoner seemed to astonish him as much as his mysterious disappearance must have done.

"Can I speak to Herr Schultz?" repeated Max, finding that this exclamation was the only answer he received.

Sigimer shook his head.

"No order!" he said. "Can't come in here without an order!"

"At least you can tell Herr Schultz that I am here, and want to see him."

"Herr Schultz not here! Herr Schultz gone!" replied the giant, with a shade of sadness in his tone.

"But where is he? When will he be back?"

"Don't know! Instructions remain as before! No one can enter without an order!"

These disjointed sentences were all that Max could get from Sigimer, who to any other questions maintained a dogged and obstinate silence.

Otto at last became impatient.

"Where's the use of asking permission to enter?" said he. "It is much easier to take it!" And he shoved against the door to try and force it open. It was held by the chain, however, and a more powerful arm than his soon shut it, and rapidly drew the bolts.

"There must be several men behind there!" cried Otto, rather humiliated at this result.

He applied his eye to the gimlet-hole, and uttered a cry of surprise. "There's a second giant!"

"Arminius, no doubt," returned Max, in his turn putting his eye to the hole.

"Yes! It is Arminius, Sigimer's companion."

As he spoke, another voice, apparently from the sky, caused Max to raise his head. "*Wer da?*" it said.

This time it was Arminius who spoke, looking over the top of the wall, which he had reached by a ladder.

"Come, you know well enough who it is, Arminius!" returned Max. "Will you open, yes or no?"

These words had scarcely left his lips when the muzzle of a gun was pointed over the wall, and a bullet just grazed the brim of Otto's hat.

"Very well, here's an answer for that!" exclaimed Max, who, placing some dynamite under the door, blew it into fragments.

A breach being thus made, Otto and Max, their guns in their hands, and their knives between their teeth, sprang into the park. The ladder still leaned against the now tottering wall, and at its foot were traces of blood, but neither Arminius nor Sigimer were there to bar the progress of the adventurers.

The gardens lay before them in all the richness of their vegetation. Otto was delighted. "What a magnificent place!" he said; "but look out! We had better proceed like sharpshooters! These sourkrout-eaters are most likely watching for us—hiding behind the bushes!"

Max and Otto separated, and each taking one side of the walk which opened before them, they advanced cautiously from tree to tree, from mound to mound, after the most approved principles of strategy.

This was a wise precaution. They had not gone a hundred yards when a second shot was heard, and the bark of the tree Max had just quitted flew in splinters.

"This is serious! Down on the ground!" ejaculated Otto. And, adding example to precept, he crawled on hands and knees up to a thorny thicket bordering the square, in the center of which rose the Bull Tower. Max, not following this advice quickly enough, narrowly escaped another bullet, and only avoided a fourth by darting behind the trunk of a palm-tree.

"Fortunately these fellows shoot no better than raw recruits!" called out Otto to his friend.

"Hush!" returned Max. "Don't you see the smoke hanging about that window on the ground-floor? The villains are in ambush there! But I mean to play them a trick in my turn!"

In a trice, Max had cut a good-sized stick from the shrubbery, on which he hung his coat, placing his hat on the top. Having thus improvised a very presentable dummy, he stuck it in the ground, so that the hat and sleeves alone were visible, then, gliding up to Otto, he whispered in his ear—

"Just keep them amused by firing at the window, first from your place and then from mine! I'm off to take them in the rear!"

And Max, leaving Otto to skirmish, crept cautiously away through the bushes.

A quarter of an hour passed, while about twenty shots were exchanged without result on either side, though Max's coat and hat were completely riddled with bullets. As to the window-blinds, Otto's gun had sent them into shivers. Suddenly the firing ceased, and Otto distinctly heard a stifled cry of, "Help! help! I've got him!"

To leave his shelter, fly through the shrubbery, and spring in at the window, took Otto but a moment.

Struggling desperately on the floor, entwined like two serpents, were Max and Sigimer. Surprised by the sudden attack of his adversary, who had forced an inner door, the giant had been unable to use his weapons. But his herculean strength rendered him a formidable enemy, and although thrown to the ground, he had not lost hope of gaining the upper hand. Max, on his side, displayed remarkable vigor and agility.

The fight would certainly have terminated in the death of one of the combatants, had not Otto's intervention made a less tragic end possible. The two together soon disarmed Sigimer, and bound him so that he could move neither hand nor foot.

"Where's the other fellow?" asked Otto.

Max pointed to the further end of the room, where Arminius lay bleeding on a bench. "Has he been shot?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Otto.

Together they examined the body. "Quite dead!" said Max.

"If so the rascal might have died in a better cause!" exclaimed Otto.

"Here we are, masters of the place!" said Max. "So now to serious business. Let us first explore the study of the great Herr Schultz!"

From the room, in which the last act of the siege had been performed, the two young men proceeded through the suite of apartments which led to the sanctum of the King of Steel. Otto was lost in admiration at the sight of such splendor. Max smiled as he looked round at him, and opened, one after the other, the doors of the magnificent rooms, till they reached the green-and-gold apartment.

He had expected to find something new, but nothing so strange as the spectacle which here lay before their eyes. It looked just as if the General Post-Office of New York or Paris had been robbed and its contents thrown pell-mell on the floor. On every side were heaps of letters and sealed packets, on the writing-table, on the chairs, on the carpet. They waded knee-deep in a flood of papers. All the financial, industrial, and personal correspondence of Herr Schultz, brought to the letter-box in the park wall, and faithfully carried in by Arminius and Sigimer, had here accumulated in their master's study.

How many questions, what expectations, what anxious suspense, what misery and tears were enclosed in those voiceless envelopes addressed to Herr Schultz! What millions of money, too, no doubt, in paper, checks, bills, and orders of all sorts! Everything rested here motionless through the absence of the only hand which had a right to break these fragile but inviolable seals.

"We have now," said Max, "to discover the secret door of the laboratory!"

He began by taking all the books out of the bookcase. This was useless; he could not find the masked passage he had traversed in company with Herr Schultz. In vain he shook the panels one by one, and, with an iron rod, which he took from the mantelpiece, tapped them in succession! In vain he struck the wall in the hope of hearing it give forth a hollow sound! It was very evident that Schultz, uneasy at no longer being the sole possessor of his secret, had done away with that door.

He must necessarily have opened another. "But where?"

asked Max. "It must be here somewhere, as Arminius and Sigimer have brought the letters to this room, which Herr Schultz doubtless continued to use after my departure. I know enough of his habits to be sure that, after bricking up the old passage, he would wish to have another close at hand, and concealed from inquisitive eyes! Can there be a trap-door under the carpet?"

The carpet itself showed no signs of a cut; but none the less was it unnailed and raised. The floor, examined bit by bit, showed nothing suspicious.

"How do you know the opening is in this room at all?" asked Otto.

"I am morally certain of it!" answered Max.

"Then the ceiling only remains to be explored," returned Otto, springing on to a chair. His idea was to get up to the luster and sound the central rose with the butt end of his gun.

However, no sooner had he grasped the gilded chandelier, than, to his extreme surprise, it sunk under his hand. The ceiling opened and left to view a wide gap, from which a light, self-acting steel ladder slid down level with the floor.

It was a distinct invitation to ascend.

"Here we are! Come along!" said Max, composedly, and immediately began to mount the ladder, closely followed by his friend.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE KERNEL OF THE NUT

THE top of the steel ladder was fixed close to the wall of a vast circular chamber, there being no communication with the exterior. It would have been in complete darkness had it not been for a dazzling white light which streamed through the thick glass of a bull's-eye, fixed in the center of the oak floor. For purity and brilliancy it might be compared to the moon, when she is in her full beauty.

Perfect silence reigned within these mute and eyeless walls. The two young men imagined themselves in the antechamber of a tomb.

But before bending over the glass, Max hesitated for a moment. He had attained his object! The secret, to pene-

trate which he had come to Steeltown, was about to be revealed to him!

This feeling, however, soon passed off. Together he and Otto knelt beside the disc and looked down into the chamber beneath. A horrible and unexpected sight met their astonished gaze.

The glass disc, being convex on both sides, formed a lens, which immensely increased in size all objects seen through it. Here was the secret laboratory of Herr Schultz. The intense glare which shone through the disc, as if from the lantern of a lighthouse, came from a double electric lamp, still burning in its airless bell, being incessantly fed by a powerful voltaic pile.

In the middle of the room, motionless as marble, and enormously magnified by the refraction of the lens, a human form was seated. Pieces and splinters of shells were strewn on the ground around this specter.

There was no doubt about it! It was Herr Schultz himself, recognizable by his horrid grinning mouth, and his gleaming teeth; but a gigantic Herr Schultz, suffocated and frozen by the action of a terrible cold, caused by the explosion of one of his frightful engines of warfare.

The King of Steel was seated at his table, holding an enormous pen like a lance in his hand, as if he were writing. Had it not been for the stony glare of his dilated eyeballs, and his set mouth, he would have appeared still living. Here this awful corpse had been for a month, hidden from all eyes, and now discovered like a mammoth which has been concealed for ages in the glaciers of the Polar regions. Everything around him was frozen, the re-agents in their jars, the water in its receivers, and the mercury in its reservoirs!

In spite of the horror of this spectacle, Max's first thought was one of satisfaction that they had been fortunate enough to be able to observe the interior of the laboratory from the outside, for if he and Otto had entered they must infallibly have been struck dead.

Max soon guessed how the fearful accident had occurred, when he marked that the fragments scattered on the ground were small pieces of glass. He knew that the inner case of Herr Schultz's suffocating projectiles contained liquid carbonic acid, and that, to resist the enormous pressure, it was

formed of tempered glass, which has ten or twelve times the ordinary strength; the great fault of this newly-invented production, however, is that, by some mysterious action, it often suddenly bursts without any apparent reason. This was evidently what had happened. Perhaps the interior pressure had helped to provoke the explosion of the shell deposited in the laboratory; at any rate, the discharged acid, on returning to a gaseous state, had occasioned a fearful lowering of the surrounding atmosphere, even to a hundred degrees below zero.

The effects had indeed been something awful. Death had surprised Herr Schultz in the attitude he was in at the time of the explosion, and in a moment he was turned into ice.

One circumstance which Max particularly noticed, was that at the time of his death the King of Steel was engaged in writing. What was inscribed on the sheet of paper lying beneath that lifeless hand? It would be interesting to know the last thought, and read the last words of such a man.

The difficulty was to procure the paper. The idea of breaking the disc so as to descend into the laboratory could not be entertained for an instant. The gas would have immediately rushed out and suffocated every living being. The risk of bringing a sudden death upon themselves could not be run merely for the sake of satisfying their curiosity. Max, therefore, seeing that the writing as well as everything else was so wonderfully magnified and brilliantly illuminated, endeavored to read it from a distance. Being well acquainted with the handwriting of Herr Schultz, with a little trouble he at last made out the following lines.

According to the usual custom of Herr Schultz, it was rather an order than an instruction. "Order to B. K. R. Z. to advance the projected expedition against Frankville by a fortnight. As soon as this order is received execute the measures I have devised; they must this time be overwhelming and complete. Do not alter an iota of what I have decided upon. I wish that in a fortnight Frankville should become a city of the dead without a surviving inhabitant. I hope for a modern Pompeii, to be at once a terror and an astonishment to the whole world. If my orders are properly executed, this result will be inevitable.

"You will send the bodies of Dr. Sarrasin and Max Bruckmann to me. I wish to have them.

"Schult——."

The signature was unfinished, the final z and the usual flourish being wanting.

Max and Otto gazed mute and motionless at this strange spectacle, feeling as if they were witnessing the invocation of some malignant genius.

But it was time to leave the dismal scene, and the two friends, agitated by conflicting feelings, descended from the room above the laboratory. There, in that dark tomb, for, when the electric current failed, the lamp would be extinguished, the corpse of the King of Steel would remain alone, dried up like a mummy Pharaoh, whom twenty centuries had not reduced to dust!

An hour later, having unbound Sigimer, who seemed puzzled to know what to do with his liberty, Otto and Max quitted Steeltown, and took their way back to Frankville, which they entered the same evening.

Dr. Sarrasin was busy in his study when the return of the two young men was announced to him. "Tell them to come in!" he exclaimed. "Come in quickly!"

"Well?" said he, as soon as the friends presented themselves before him.

"Doctor," replied Max, "the news we bring from Steeltown will put your mind at rest for a long time. Herr Schultz is no more! Herr Schultz is dead!"

"Dead!" exclaimed Dr. Sarrasin.

The good man remained thoughtful for a few moments, without uttering another word. "My dear fellow," he said at last, "can you understand that this news, which ought to make me rejoice, since it takes from us the dread of the thing I most execrate, war, and the most unjust, unreasonable war ever heard of!—can you understand how, against all reason, it makes my heart ache? Oh, why should a man of such powerful intelligence have constituted himself our enemy? Why did he not use his rare intellectual qualities for the benefit of his fellow creatures? How much wisdom has been lost, which would have been so valuable, had it been associated with us, and used for a common object! All this at once struck me when you said: 'Herr Schultz is dead;' but

now tell me all that you know of the unexpected event."

"Herr Schultz," replied Max, "has met his death in the mysterious laboratory, which, with such diabolical ingenuity he had striven to render inaccessible to all others. No one but himself ever knew of its existence, and no one consequently could penetrate into it to bring him help. He has fallen a victim to that marvelous concentration of all his plans in his own hands, on which he had so erroneously relied. By the will of Providence, his desire of being himself the key to all his projects, has been turned to his own destruction!"

"It could not have been otherwise!" answered Dr. Sarrasin. "Herr Schultz started with a totally wrong notion. For, indeed, is not the best government the one of which the chief, on his death, can be most easily replaced, and which will continue to work smoothly, just because all the machinery is open and visible?"

"You will see, doctor," said Max, "how all that has happened in Steeltown bears out what you have said. We found Herr Schultz seated before his desk, that central point whence came all those orders so implicitly obeyed by the Steel City, and which no one ever dreamed of disputing. Death had left him every appearance of life, so that for a moment I thought the specter would have spoken to us! But the inventor has fallen by his own invention! He was killed by one of the shells, with which he hoped to destroy our town, just as he was signing his name to the order for our extermination! Listen!"

And Max read aloud a copy he had taken of the horrible words written by Herr Schultz.

Then, he added, "The greatest proof of the death of Herr Schultz, even if we had not seen him, is that everything around him has ceased to live. There is nothing breathing in Steeltown. As in the palace of the Sleeping Beauty, slumber has suspended all life, and arrested every movement. The effects of the master's death has extended, not only to the servants, but also to the machinery."

"Yes," returned Dr. Sarrasin; "we see in this the justice of God! From indulging in his hatred against us, and urging on his attack with such boundless rancor, Herr Schultz has perished."

"That is true," answered Max; "but now, doctor, let us leave the past and think only of the present. Although the death of Herr Schultz gives peace to us, it causes the ruin of the wonderful business he created. Blinded by his success, and his hatred of France and you, he had supplied large numbers of cannon and weapons to any one who might be our enemy, without getting sufficient guarantees. In spite of this, and although the payment of all his debts would take a long time, I believe that a strong hand could set Steeltown on its legs again, and turn to a good purpose all that has been hitherto used for an evil one. Herr Schultz has only one likely heir, doctor, and that is you. His work must not be allowed to fall to the ground entirely. It is too much the belief of this world that the only profit to be drawn from a rival force is in its total annihilation. This is not really the case, and I hope you will agree with me that, on the contrary, it is our duty to endeavor to save from this immense wreck all that can be used for the benefit of humanity. Now, I am ready to devote myself entirely to this task."

"Max is right," said Otto, grasping his friend's hand, "and here am I, ready also to work under his orders, if my father will give his consent."

"I certainly approve, my dear lads," replied Dr. Sarrasin. "Yes, Max, there will be no want of capital, and, thanks to you, I shall hope to have in the resuscitated Steeltown such an arsenal that no one in the world will ever henceforth dream of attacking us! And as we shall then be the strongest, we must at the same time endeavor to be also the most just, we must spread the benefits of peace and justice all around. Ah, Max! what enchanting dreams! And when I feel that, with you to help me, I can at least accomplish a part, I ask myself why—yes, why have I not two sons! Why are you not the brother of Otto! We three working together, it seems as if nothing could be impossible!"

CHAPTER XIX
A FAMILY AFFAIR

PERHAPS in the course of this veracious narrative we have not been sufficiently communicative about the personal history of those who have played such prominent parts in it. We may now, therefore, be allowed to stop in order to give a few details regarding them.

It must be acknowledged that the good doctor was not so entirely taken up with the idea of collective humanity, as to merge in it the welfare of individuals. He had, therefore, been struck by the sudden pallor which overspread the countenance of Max as he uttered his last words. He sought to read in the young man's eyes the cause of this sudden emotion. The silence of the older man seemed to question the engineer, as if he expected him to speak, but Max, mastering himself with a strong effort, immediately resumed his composure. His complexion reassumed its natural tint, and his attitude was merely that of a man who expects the continuance of an interesting conversation.

Dr. Sarrasin, slightly provoked at this evidently assumed calmness, approached his young friend, and with a familiar gesture, laid his hand upon his wrist, just as he would on that of a patient, whose pulse he wished quietly, unobtrusively to feel.

Max allowed this naturally without apparently noticing the doctor's intentions, and as he did not open his lips, "My dear Max," observed the old man, "we will put off our conversation about the future destiny of Steeltown to some other time. For although we are vowed to the work of laboring to ameliorate the condition of mankind, it is not forbidden us also to occupy ourselves with the fate of those we love, of those who are nearest to us. Well, I think the time has come to tell you what a young lady, whose name I will mention presently, replied not long ago to her father and mother, when for the twentieth time that year they had been asked for her in marriage.

"The proposals were, for the most part, such that even the most fastidious could have had no reason for refusing them, and yet this young woman always said 'No!'

At this point Max drew his hand away with a sudden movement from the doctor's grasp, and the latter, as if he

was satisfied on the subject of his patient's health, and had not noticed that both his arm and his confidence had been withdrawn, quietly continued his story.

"'Well, now,' said the mother, to the young lady of whom I speak, 'just tell me the reason of these continued refusals. Education, fortune, position, good looks, all are there. Why this decided no, so resolute and prompt, to requests which you don't even take the trouble to consider a little? You are not usually so very peremptory!'

"At this the girl determined to speak clearly and frankly, and thereupon replied, "'I say no with as much sincerity as I would say yes, dear mother, if the yes came really from my heart. I agree with you that several of the matches you have proposed to me are perfectly unexceptionable; but, besides my belief that most of those addresses were paid more to what is considered the best, that is the richest match in the town, than to me myself, and that that idea does not incline me to say yes, I will venture to tell you, since you wish it, that none of these proposals is the one I hope for, the one that I still expect, and which, unfortunately, I may have to wait a long time for, if it ever comes at all!'

"'What, my dear,' said the mother, in surprise, 'you——'

"She did not end that sentence, for want of knowing how to finish it, and in perplexity turned to her husband, with looks which plainly begged for help and advice.

"However, as he did not intend to interfere in the discussion between the mother and daughter until a little more light had been thrown on the subject, he put on an obtuse air, and counterfeited so well that the poor girl, blushing with embarrassment, and perhaps with a little anger, suddenly determined to make a clean breast of it.

"'I said, dear mother,' she continued, 'that the proposal I hoped for might be a very long time in coming, and might possibly never come at all. I add that this delay, although so indefinite, will neither hurt nor astonish me. I have the misfortune to be very rich; he, whose proposal I hope for, is very poor; therefore, he will not make it, and he is right. It is for him to wait——'

"'Why not for us to speak,' said the mother, wishing, perhaps, to prevent her daughter from uttering words she feared to hear.

"Then the husband interposed.

"'My dear,' he said, affectionately, taking his wife's hands in his, 'it is not with impunity that a mother, reverenced by her daughter as you are, can constantly in her presence sing the praises of a fine, handsome fellow, who, ever since she was born, has been almost one of the family, that she remarks to every one on the solidity of his character, that she glories in what her husband says, when he has occasion in his turn to boast of his remarkable intelligence, or speaks feelingly of the thousand proofs of devotion he has received from him! If the girl who saw this young man, distinguished both by her father and her mother, had not admired him herself, she would have failed in her duty!'

"'Oh, father!' cried the girl, throwing herself into her mother's arms, to hide her confusion, 'if you guessed, why did you make me speak!'

"'Why?' returned the father, 'why, but to have the joy of hearing you, my darling, that I might be still more certain that I was not mistaken, to be able at last to tell you that both your mother and I approve your choice, that your heart has been given where we wished; and to spare a poor and proud man from making a proposal, at which he feels a reluctant delicacy, I will do it myself—yes, I will do it, because I have read his heart as I have read yours! Calm yourself then! On the first favorable opportunity, I will ask Max, if, by any possibility, he would care to become my son-in-law!'"

Taken unawares by this sudden peroration, Max had started to his feet as if moved by a spring. Otto silently grasped his hand, while Dr. Sarrasin held out his arms. The young Alsacian was pale as death. But does not happiness sometimes take this appearance when it enters without warning into a strong heart!

CHAPTER XX
CONCLUSION

Frankville, released from all anxiety, in peace with its neighbors, well governed, happy, thanks to the good behavior of its inhabitants, is highly prosperous. Its success is so justly merited that it causes no envy, and its strength enforces the respect even of the most warlike.

Under the iron rule of Herr Schultz, the City of Steel was a terrible manufactory, an organized source of destruction; but, thanks to Max Bruckmann, the liquidation of its debts was effected without loss to any one, and Steeltown became a center of production, unsurpassed by any other industry.

A year ago, Max became the happy husband of Jeannette, and the birth of a child has recently added to their felicity.

As to Otto, he worked gallantly under his brother-in-law's directions, and seconded all his efforts. His sister is hoping soon to see him married to a friend of hers, whose good sense will preserve her husband from any relapse.

The wishes of the doctor and his wife are thus fulfilled, and to put it in a few words, they are at the zenith of happiness and even of glory—if glory ever entered into the program of their honest ambitions.

We may now be assured that the future belongs to the efforts of Dr. Sarrasin and Max Bruckmann, and that the example of Frankville and Steeltown, as model city and manufactory, will not be lost upon future generations.

THE END

The Tribulations of a Chinaman in China

Tribulations of a Chinaman

CHAPTER I

THE FIRST WATCH OF THE NIGHT

T must be admitted that life has some good in it," said one of the guests, leaning his elbow on the arm of his marble-backed chair, while he sat biting the root of a sugar water-lily.

"And some bad also," answered another, between fits of coughing, occasioned by having swallowed the prickly part of the delicate fin of a shark which had nearly choked him.

"Be philosophical," said an older man, who wore on his nose an enormous pair of wooden spectacles with large glasses. "To-day, one runs the risk of strangling, and to-morrow everything flows as smoothly as the sweet draughts of this nectar—such is life."

After saying these words, this easy-going epicure swallowed a glass of warm wine, the steam of which slowly escaped from a metal teapot.

"For my part," said a fourth guest, "life appears to be very acceptable when one does nothing, and has the means to afford to do nothing."

"That is a mistake," answered the fifth. "Happiness is to be found in study and work. To acquire the greatest amount of knowledge is the way to be happy."

"And to learn at last that one knows nothing."

"Is not that the commencement of wisdom?"

"What, then, is the end?"

"Wisdom has no end," philosophically answered the man with the spectacles. "To have common sense should be supreme satisfaction."

It was then that the first guest directly addressed the host, who occupied the upper end of the table—that is the worst place—as the laws of politeness exacted. Indifferent and

inattentive the latter listened without saying anything during this discussion. "Come, let us hear what our host has to say? Does he find existence good or bad? Is he for or against it?"

The host carelessly cracked some melon seeds, and answered by disdainfully moving his lips like a man who takes no interest in anything. "Pooh!" said he.

This is the favorite word of indifferent people. It says everything, and means nothing. It is in every language, and has a place in every dictionary in the world. It is an articulated grimace.

The five guests who were entertained by this weary host pressed him with arguments, each in favor of his own proposition. They wanted his opinion. He tried to avoid answering, but replied by affirming that life had no good or bad in it. In his view, "it was an invention, insignificant enough, and having but little enjoyment in it."

"Ah, now our friend speaks; but why should he thus speak, since the rustle of a rose has not even troubled his repose?"

"And he is young yet."

"Young and rich."

"Perhaps too rich."

These remarks flew about like rockets from fireworks, without bringing a smile to the host's impassable physiognomy. He was satisfied to shrug his shoulders slightly, like a man who had never wished to turn over the leaves in the book of his life, and who had not even cut the first pages.

And yet this indifferent man was at least thirty-one years of age; he possessed a large fortune, enjoyed good health, was not without culture, his intelligence was above the average, and he had everything, which so many want, to make him one of the happiest men in the world. And why was he not happy?

"Why?"

The grave voice of the philosopher was now heard, speaking like the leader of a chorus. "Friend," he said, "if you are not happy here below it is because your happiness thus far has been only negative. It is with happiness as it is with health, to enjoy it one should sometimes be deprived of it. Now, have you never been ill? I mean to ask, rather,

have you never been unfortunate? It is that which is wanting in your life. Who can appreciate happiness if misfortune has never, even for a moment, assailed him?"

And at this observation, full of wisdom, the philosopher, raising his glass full of the best champagne, said, "I wish that the sun of our host's life may be a little darkened, and that he may experience some sorrows." After which he emptied his glass.

The host made a nod of assent, and lapsed into his habitual apathy.

Where did this conversation take place? Was it in a European dining-room in Paris, London, Vienna, or St. Petersburg? Were these six guests assembled together in a restaurant in the Old or the New World? And who were they who, without having drunk to excess, were discussing these questions in the midst of a feast? They were not Frenchmen, you may rest assured, because they were not talking politics.

These six guests were seated in a medium-sized dining-room elegantly decorated. The last rays of the sun were streaming through the net-work of blue and orange window-glass, and past the open windows the breeze was full of the odor of natural flowers. A few lanterns mingled their variegated light with the dying light of day. Above the windows were sculptured and rich arabesques, representing celestial and terrestrial beauty, and animals and vegetables of a strange fauna and flora.

As to the servants, they were very prepossessing young girls, whose hair was mingled with lilies and chrysanthemums, and whose arms were coquettishly encircled with bracelets of gold. Smiling, they served or removed the dishes with one hand, while with the other each gracefully waved a large fan which restored the currents of the air.

The moment came at last when the young girls brought in, not, according to European fashion, finger-bowls containing perfumed water, but napkins saturated with warm water, which each of the guests passed over his face with extreme satisfaction.

It was only an interlude of the repast—an hour of luxurious rest, while the music filled up the moments, for soon a troupe of singers and musicians entered the room. The singers were young and pretty girls, of modest appearance

and behavior; but what music and method was there—it was a mewing and harsh noise, without measure or tune, sometimes rising in sharp notes to the utmost limit of perception by the auditory nerves.

The six guests then left their seats, but only to pass from one table to another, which was done with great ceremony and compliments of all sorts. On this second table each found a small cup having a lid ornamented with a portrait of Bodhidharama, the celebrated Buddhist monk, standing on his legendary raft. Each of the guests received a pinch of tea, which he infused in the boiling water in his cup, without any sugar, and he drank it immediately.

And what tea! It was not to be feared that the house of Gibb, Gibb and Co., who supplied it, had adulterated it with a mixture of foreign leaves; or that it had already been subjected to a first infusion, and was only good to use in sweeping carpets; or that a dishonest preparer had colored it yellow with curcuma, or green with Prussian blue! It was imperial tea in all its purity, and its leaves were the first gathering in the month of March—those precious leaves which are like the flower itself, for the loss of the leaves causes the death of the plant. It was composed of those leaves which young children alone are allowed to gather, with carefully gloved hands.

The cups were still full, and the host, with his eyes fixed on vacancy and his elbow leaning on the table, expressed himself in these words: "My friends, listen to me without laughing; the die is cast. I am going to introduce into my life a new element, which may perhaps vary its monotony. Will it be for good or for evil? The future only can tell. This dinner to which I have invited you, is my farewell dinner to bachelor life. In fifteen days I shall be married, and——"

"And you will be the happiest of men," cried the optimist. "See, all the signs are in your favor."

Indeed, the lamps flickered, and cast a pale light around, the magpies chattered on the arabesques of the windows, and the little tea leaves floated perpendicularly in the cups. So many lucky omens could not fail.

They all congratulated their host, who received their compliments with the greatest coolness. But as he did not name the person destined to fill the part of the "new element to

his happiness," and whom he had chosen, no one was indiscreet enough to interrogate him on the subject.

Yet, the philosopher's voice was not heard among the general concert of congratulations. With his arms crossed, his eyes partly closed, and an ironical smile on his lips, he seemed to approve those who paid the compliments no more than he did the one who was complimented.

The latter rose, placed his hand on his friend's shoulder, and in a voice that seemed less calm than usual, asked, "Am I then too old to marry?"

"No!"

"Too young?"

"No; neither too young nor too old."

"Do you think I am acting wrong?"

"Probably so."

"But she, whom I have chosen, and whom you know, has everything that is necessary to make me happy."

"I know it."

"Well, then?"

"But it is you who have not everything necessary to make you happy. To be bored during single life is bad, but to be bored double is worse."

"Am I, then, never to be happy?"

"No; not so long as you do not know what misfortune is."

"Misfortune cannot reach me."

"So much the worse; for then you are incurable."

"Ah! these philosophers," cried the youngest of the guests. "One should not listen to them. They are theoretical; they manufacture all kinds of theories which are impracticable. Get married, get married, my friend. I should do the same, had I not made a vow never to do anything. Get married; and, as the poets say, 'May the two phœnixes always appear to you tenderly united.' My friends, I drink to the success of our host."

"And I," answered the philosopher, "drink to the near interposition of some protecting divinity, who, in order to make him happy, will require him to pass through the trial of misfortune."

At this singular toast, the guests arose, brought their fists together as they do at games before beginning the struggle; and having alternately lowered and raised

them while bowing their heads, took leave of each other.

From the description of the dining-room where the entertainment was given, and the strange bill of fare which composed it, as well as from the dress and manner of the guests, and perhaps from the singularity of the theories which they advanced, the reader has guessed that we are speaking of the Chinese, not of those " Celestials " who look as if they had been taken from some Chinese screen, or had escaped from some piece of pottery, but of the modern inhabitants of the Celestial Empire, already Europeanized by their studies, their voyages, and their frequent communication with the civilization of the West.

Indeed, it was in the saloon of one of the flower boats on the River of Pearls, at Canton, that the rich Kin-Fo, accompanied by the inseparable Wang, the philosopher, had just given an entertainment to four of the best friends of his youth. Pao-Shen, a mandarin of the fourth class, and of the order of the blue button; Yin-Pang, a rich silk merchant in Apothecary street; Tim, the high liver; and Houal. the literary man.

And this entertainment took place on the 27th day of the 4th moon, during the first of those five periods which so poetically divide the hours of the Chinese night.

CHAPTER II

ANTECEDENTS

If Kin-Fo gave his farewell dinner to his Canton friends, it was because he had passed a part of his youth in the capital of the Province of Kouang-Tong. Of the numerous companions a rich and generous young man is sure to have, the four invited guests on the flower boat were the only ones left him at this time. As to the others, they were dispersed by the accidents of life; he would have looked in vain to have brought them together.

Kin-Fo lived in Shang-Hai at this time, and for a change of air he was spending a few days in Canton. This evening he intended to take the steamer which stops at the principal points along the coast, and return quietly home to his yamen.

Why Wang accompanied Kin-Fo was because the philoso-

pher could never leave his pupil, who did not want for lessons. To tell the truth he paid no attention to them, they were so many maxims and wise sentences lost. The " theory machine," according to Tim, the high liver, was never weary of producing them.

Kin-Fo was a good type of the northern Chinamen who have never joined with the Tartars. You might not meet his equal in the southern provinces, where the high and low classes are more intimately blended with the Mandshurian race. Kin-Fo neither from his father nor his mother, whose ancestors kept secluded after the conquest, had a drop of Tartar blood in his veins. He was tall, well-built, fair rather than yellow, with straight eyebrows, and eyes following the horizontal, and but slightly raised toward the temple; he had a straight nose, and a face that was not flat. He would have been distinguished even among the finest specimens of Western people.

Indeed if Kin-Fo appeared like a Chinaman, it was because of his carefully shaven skull, his smooth, hairless brow and neck, and his magnificent *queue,* which started from the occiput and rolled down like a serpent of jet. Careful of his person, he wore a delicate mustache which made a half circle over his upper lip, and an imperial which was exactly like a rest seen in a piece of music. His nails were more than a centimeter long, a proof that he belonged to that category of lucky men who can live without work. Perhaps, too, his careless manner and his haughty bearing added somewhat to his distinguished appearance.

Besides, Kin-Fo was born at Pekin, an advantage of which the Chinese are very proud. To any one who would have asked him where he came from, he would have answered, " I come from above."

It was at Pekin that his father, Tchoung-Heou, lived when he was born, and he was six years old when the former settled at Shang-Hai. This worthy Chinaman, who came from an excellent family in the northern part of the empire, possessed, like his countrymen, a remarkable capacity for business. During the first years of his career, he traded and sold everything that the rich and populous territory produced: Such as paper goods from Swatow; silks from Sou-Tcheou; sugar candy from Formosa; tea from Hankow and Foochow; iron from Honan; and red and yellow copper

from the province of Yunanne. All were to him articles of trade and commerce. During the years following his capital was doubled, owing to the creation of a new commerce, which might be called "the Coolie trade of the New World."

It is toward North America, and principally into the State of California, that the surplus population of China is directed, but this has been done in such great numbers that Congress has been obliged to take restrictive measures against the invasion, rather impolitely called "the yellow pest."

Rich companies undertake the transportation of these inexpensive emigrants. Five had charge of the enlisting in the five provinces of the Celestial Empire, and a sixth had quarters at San Francisco. The first five shipped the merchandise, and the sixth received them. An additional agency, called the Ting-Tong, was stationed where they were reshipped.

This requires an explanation. The Chinese are very willing to expatriate themselves to seek their fortunes with the "Melicans," as they call the population of the United States, but on one condition, that their bodies shall be faithfully brought back and buried in their native land. This is one of the principal conditions of the contract a *sine qua non* clause which is binding on these companies toward the emigrant, and nothing can avoid it. So that the Ting-Tong, otherwise called the "Agency of the Dead," which draws its funds from private sources, is charged with freighting the "corpse-steamers," which leave San Francisco fully loaded for Shang-Hai, Hong-Kong, or Tien-Tsin.

This new kind of business, and new source of profit, the able and enterprising Tchoung-Heou soon saw. At the time of his death, in the year 1866, he was a director in the Kouang-Than Company, in the province of that name, and sub-director of the treasury for the dead in San Francisco.

Kin-Fo having now no father or mother, was heir to a fortune valued at four millions of francs, which was invested in stock in the Central Bank of California, and he had the good sense to let it remain there. At the time he lost his father, the young heir, who was nineteen years old, would have been alone in the world, had it not been for Wang,

the inseparable Wang, who filled the place of mentor and friend.

But who was this Wang? For seventeen years he had lived in the yamen at Shang-Hai, and he was the guest of the father before he became that of the son. But where did he come from? What were his antecedents? All these obscure questions Tchoung-Heou and Kin-Fo alone could answer; and if they had considered proper to do so, which was not probable, this is what they would have said:

Every one knows that China is the kingdom where insurrections last many years, and carry off hundreds of thousands of men. Now, in the seventeenth century, the celebrated dynasty of Ming, of Chinese origin, reigned in China three hundred years; when, in the year 1644, the chief, feeling unable to cope with the rebels who threatened the capital, asked aid of a Tartar king. The king hastened to his aid without being pressed to do so; he drove out the rebels, profited by the situation to overthrow him who had asked his aid, and he proclaimed his own son, Chun-Tche, emperor.

From this period, the Tartar authority was substituted for that of the Chinese, and the throne was occupied by Manchurian emperors. By degrees the two races, especially among the lower classes, came together; but among the rich families of the north the separation between the Chinese and the Tartars was maintained more strictly. The type still retains its characteristics, particularly in the center of the Western Provinces of the Empire. There are centered what are called "the irreconcilables," who remain faithful to the fallen dynasty.

Kin-Fo's father belonged to the latter class, and he did not belie the traditions of his family. A rising against the foreign power, even after a reign of three hundred years, would have found him ready to join it. His son, Kin-Fo, fully shared his political opinions.

In the year 1860, the Emperor S'Hiene-Fong declared war against England and France—a war ended by the treaty of Pekin, on the 25th of October of the same year. Before that date, a formidable uprising threatened the then reigning dynasty. The Tchang-Mao or the Tai-ping, the "long-haired rebels," took possession of Nan-King in 1853, and Shang-Hai in 1855. S'Heine-Fong being dead, his son

had great difficulty in repulsing the Tai-ping. Without the Viceroy Li and Prince Kong, and especially the English colonel, Gordon, he perhaps would not have been able to save his throne.

The Tai-ping, the declared enemies of the Tartars, having strongly organized for rebellion, wished to replace the ancient dynasty of the Ming. They formed four distinct bands; the first under a black banner, appointed to kill; the second under a red banner, to set fire; the third under a yellow banner, to pillage and rob; and the fourth, under a white banner, were commissioned to provision the other three.

There were important military operations in Kiang-Sou and Sou-Tcheou, and Kia-Hing, about five leagues distant from Shang-Hai, fell into the power of the rebels, and were recovered, not without great difficulty, by the imperial troops. Shang-Hai was menaced, and even attacked, on the 18th of August, 1860, at the time that Generals Grant and Montauban, commanding the Anglo-French army, were cannonading the forts of Pei-Ho.

Now, at this time Tchoung-Heou, Kin-Fo's father, was living near Shang-Hai, not far from the beautiful bridge which the Chinese engineers had thrown across the river at Sou-Tcheou. This rebellion of the Tai-ping he could not regard but with approval, since it was chiefly directed against the Tartar dynasty. On the evening of the 18th of August, after the rebels had been driven out of Shang-Hai, the door of Tchoung-Heou's house suddenly opened.

A fugitive, who had escaped from his pursuers, threw himself at the feet of Tchoung-Heou. This unfortunate man had no weapon with which to defend himself, and if he was given up to the imperial soldiers he was lost.

Kin-Fo's father was not the man to betray a Tai-ping who sought refuge in his house, and he shut the door, and said, "I do not wish to know, and I never shall know, who you are, what you have done, or whence you come; you are my guest, and for that reason you are safe at my house."

The fugitive wished to speak to express his acknowledgments, but he was unable from weakness.

"Your name?" asked Tchoung-Heou.

"Wang." It was indeed Wang, who was saved by the generosity of Tchoung-Heou—a generosity which would

have cost the latter his life, if he was suspected of having given hospitality to a rebel.

A few years afterward the uprising of the rebels was forever repressed. In the year 1864 the Tai-ping chief, who was besieged at Nan-King, poisoned himself, to avoid falling into the hands of the imperials. Wang, from that day forward, remained in the house of his benefactor. He never referred to the past, and no one questioned him. The atrocities committed by the rebels were said to be frightful, and under what banner Wang had served—the yellow, red, black, or white—it was better to remain in ignorance of, and to believe that he belonged to the provisioning column.

Wang was pleased with his lot, and he continued to be the guest of this hospitable house. After Tchoung-Heou's death, his son had no desire to be separated from him, so much accustomed had he become to the company of this amiable person.

Indeed, at the time of this story who would have ever recognized a former Tai-ping, a murderer, a robber, or an incendiary from choice, in this philosopher of fifty-five years, this moralist in spectacles.

With his long, modest robe, and the sash around his waist rising toward his chest from growing obesity, with his head-dress regulated according to the imperial decree, wearing a fur hat with the rim raised around the crown, from whence fell tassels of red cord, did he not look like a worthy professor of philosophy, and one of those learned men who write fluently in the eighty thousand characters of Chinese writing, and like a savant of superior dialect receiving the first prize in the examination of doctors, with the right to pass under the gate of Pekin reserved for the "Sons of Heaven?" Perhaps, after all, the rebel had improved by contact with the honest Tchoung-Heou, and he had gradually entered into the study of speculative philosophy.

On the evening when Kin-Fo and Wang, who never left each other, were together at Canton, after the farewell dinner, they both went along the wharves to seek the steamer to take them quickly to Shang-Hai. Kin-Fo walked on in silence, and in a pensive mood. Wang looked round to the right and to the left, philosophizing to the moon and

to the stars; passed smilingly under the gate of "Eternal Purity," which he did not find too high for him, and under the gate of "Eternal Joy," whose gates seemed to open on his own existence, and finally saw the pagoda of the "Five Hundred Divinities" vanishing in the distance.

CHAPTER III

KIN-FO AT HOME

A YAMEN is a number of buildings, variously constructed, ranged according to a parallel line, which a second line of kiosks and pavilions cut across perpendicularly. Ordinarily, the yamen serves as a dwelling for mandarins of high rank, and belongs to the emperor; but it is not forbidden to wealthy Celestials to have one. It was in one of these sumptuous hotels that the wealthy Kin-Fo dwelt in Shang-Hai.

Wang and his pupil stopped at the principal gate opening on the vast inclosure, which surrounded the various constructions of the yamen and its garden and courtyards. If, instead of being the dwelling of a private person, it had been that of a mandarin magistrate, a large drum would have occupied the best place under the roof of the porch over the door, and where in the night as well as the day those of his deputies who might have to seek for justice would have knocked; but instead of this "drum" large porcelain jars ornamented the entrance to the yamen, which contained cold tea, and which were kept constantly filled by his servants.

These jars were for the benefit of passers-by, which did honor to the generosity of Kin-Fo. He was well and favorably regarded, as they say, by his neighbors in the east and the west.

On the arrival of the master, the servants of the house ran to the door to receive him. Valets-de-chambre, footmen, porters, chair-bearers, waiters, coachmen, and cooks, all who compose a Chinese household, formed into line under the orders of the steward. A dozen of coolies, engaged by the month for the coarse work, stood a little in the rear.

The steward welcomed the master to the house, who made a sign with his hand and passed rapidly on.

"Soun," he merely said.

"Soun," answered Wang, smiling. "If Soun were here, it would not be Soun."

"Where is he?" asked Kin-Fo.

The steward had to confess that neither he, nor any one, knew where he was. Now Soun was no less a person than the first valet-de-chambre, specially attached to Kin-Fo's person, and was one whom he could by no means dispense with.

Was Soun, then a model servant? No, he could not possibly have done his duty in a worse manner; he was absent-minded, awkward with his hands and tongue, a great eater, and a great coward; but he was a true Chinaman, faithful on the whole, and the only one possessed of the gift of moving his master. Did Kin-Fo find a necessity to get angry with Soun twenty times a day, yet if he only corrected him ten times, there was just so much less to rouse him from his habitual indolence, and put his bile in motion. It was evident that he was a hygienic servant.

Soun, like the most of Chinese servants, came of himself to be corrected when he deserved it. The blows of the rattan would be poured on his shoulders, but he hardly cared for that. What caused him to show more sensibility was the successive cuttings of his braided pigtail, which Kin-Fo made him undergo when he had committed any grave fault.

Probably every one is aware how much the Chinaman values this singular appendage. The loss of his queue, or pigtail, is the first punishment applied to criminals. It is a dishonor for life, so that the unfortunate valet dreaded nothing so much as to be condemned to lose a piece of it. Four years before, when he entered Kin-Fo's service, his braid was one of the finest in the Celestial Empire, and measured over four feet, now it only measured two, so that Soun in two years would be entirely bald.

Wang and Kin-Fo, followed respectfully by the servants of the house, crossed the garden, where the trees, mostly set in porcelain vases, and cut in a surprising style of art, assumed the form of fantastic animals. Then they walked around the large basin containing the fishes, in which the water was hidden from view under the pale red flowers of the most beautiful of the native water-lilies in the Empire

of Flowers. All that Chinese fancy, with European comfort, might be found in this luxurious dwelling.

Kin-Fo was a man of progress, and his tastes proved it. He was not averse to the importation of every modern Western invention. He belonged to that category of the Sons of Heaven, still too rare, who are charmed by the physical and chemical sciences. He was not one of those barbarians who cut the first telegraph wires which the house of Reynolds wished to establish as far as Wousung, with the view of ascertaining more quickly the arrival of English and American mails; nor was he one of those backward mandarins who, in order not to let the submarine cable from Shang-Hai to Hong-Kong be attached at any point whatsoever of the territory, obliged the electricians to fasten it on a boat in the open river.

Material progress was introduced into his house. Indeed, the telephone gave communication between the different buildings in his yamen, and electric bells connected the rooms in his house. During the cold weather he was not ashamed to have a fire, and he was more sensible in this respect than his fellow-citizens, who freeze under four or five suits of clothes.

The pupil of the philosopher Wang had all that was necessary to make him happy in his material, as well as his moral life. He had Soun to rouse him from his daily apathy. Yet even Soun was not sufficient to give him happiness.

It is true that, at the present moment, Soun, who was never where he ought to be, did not show himself. He had some grave fault, no doubt, to reproach himself with—something which he had done wrong during his master's absence; and he feared for his shoulders, habituated as he was to the rattan. Perchance he even trembled for his pigtail.

"Soun!" said Kin-Fo, as he entered the hall into which the rooms opened to the right and to the left, and his voice indicated an ill-repressed impatience.

"Soun!" repeated Wang, whose good advice and reproaches were always thrown away upon the incorrigible valet.

"Let some one find Soun, and have him brought to me," said Kin-Fo, addressing the steward, who set every one to searching for the lost one.

Wang and Kin-Fo were now alone. "Wisdom," said the philosopher, "commands the traveler who returns to his fireside to take some repose."

"Let us be wise," simply answered Wang's pupil, and after shaking the philosopher's hand, he directed his steps toward his apartment, while Wang sought his own chamber.

Kin-Fo, when alone, stretched himself on one of those soft lounges of European manufacture which a Chinese upholsterer could never have made so comfortable. In this position he began to meditate. Was it about his marriage with the amiable and handsome woman he was to make his companion for life? Yes; but that is not surprising, because he was on the eve of visiting her. This charming person did not reside in Shang-Hai, but in Pekin; and Kin-Fo considered that it would be only proper to announce to her his return to Shang-Hai, and his intention of soon visiting the capital of the Celestial Empire; and even if he were to show a desire and some impatience to see her, he did not think it would be out of place, for he had a true affection for her. Wang had proved to him by indisputable rules of logic that he really loved her, and this new element introduced into his life might perhaps call forth the unknown —that is, happiness. Kin-Fo was dreaming with his eyes half closed, and he would have fallen asleep, if he had not felt a sort of tickling in his right hand. Instinctively his fingers came together and seized a knotty body of reasonable thickness which they were undoubtedly accustomed to handle. He was not mistaken; it was a rattan which had been slipped into his right hand, and he heard, in a resigned tone of voice, the following words: "When master wishes."

Kin-Fo rose up, and by a very natural movement he brandished the correcting rattan. Soun stood before him presenting his shoulders in the posture of a patient, and supporting himself on the floor by one hand, he held a letter in the other.

"Well, here you are at last," cried Kin-Fo.

"Yes, yes," answered Soun; "I did not expect you until three o'clock; but I am ready when you wish."

Kin-Fo threw the rattan on the carpet. Soun, although naturally very yellow, had now become very pale. "If you offer your back, without any other explanation, it proves

that you deserve something more," said the master. "What is the matter?"

"This letter."

"Well, what of it? Speak!" cried Kin-Fo, at the same time taking the letter which Soun presented to him.

"I very stupidly forgot to give it to you before you left for Canton."

"A week behind time, you rogue."

"I did wrong, my master."

"Come here."

"I am like a poor crab," said Soun, "that has no claws, and cannot walk—yes! yes!"

This last yes was one of despair. Kin-Fo seized Soun by his pigtail, and with one clip of the scissors cut off the extreme end.

It is believed that claws grow instantaneously on the unhappy crab; this one, having first snatched from the carpet the precious part of the queue which had been cut off, scampered hastily away.

From twenty-four inches Soun's pigtail had become reduced to twenty-three.

Kin-Fo had now resumed his usual calmness, and thrown himself on the lounge once more, and was examining, like a man whom nothing hurries, the letter which had arrived a week ago. He was only displeased with Soun on account of his negligence, not on account of the delay. What could there be in a letter that would interest him? It would be interesting if it could only cause him an emotion. An emotion for him! He looked at it vacantly. The envelope, made of heavy linen paper, showed on the address and the reverse side sundry postmarks of a chocolate and wine color, with the picture of a man underneath the figure "2" and "six cents," which indicated that it came from the United States of America.

"Good!" said Kin-Fo, shrugging his shoulders; "a letter from my correspondent in San Francisco," and he threw the letter in the corner of a divan.

Indeed, what could his correspondent have to tell him? That the title deeds which composed almost all his fortune slept quietly in the vaults of the Central Bank in California, or that his stock had risen from fifteen to twenty per cent., or that the dividends to be distributed would exceed those of

the preceding year? A few millions of dollars, more or less, was not sufficient to move him.

A few minutes later Kin-Fo took up the letter and mechanically tore the envelope; but, instead of reading it, his eyes only sought for the signature. "It is, indeed, from my correspondent," he said; "he can have nothing to say but about business, and to-morrow I will attend to business."

A second time Kin-Fo was about to throw the letter aside, when his attention was called to a word underlined several times on the second page. It was the word "*indebtedness,*" to which the San Francisco correspondent evidently wished to attract the attention of his client at Shang-Hai.

Kin-Fo took up the letter again, and read it from the beginning to the end, not without a certain feeling of curiosity, rather surprising on his part. For a moment his eyebrows contracted, but a disdainful smile settled on his lips when he finished reading it.

Kin-Fo rose, walked about twenty steps, and approached the acoustic tube which placed him in direct communication with Wang; he was about to carry the mouthpiece to his lips when he changed his mind, let the rubber fall, and returning, threw himself on a divan. "Pooh!" said he.

"And she," he murmured—"she is really more interested in all this than I am."

He then approached a little table, on which stood a box of rare carving; but as he was about to open it, he stopped. "What was it, that her last letter said?" he murmured.

Instead of raising the box cover, he pressed a spring at one end, and immediately a sweet voice was heard: "My little elder brother, am I no longer to you like the flower 'Mei-houa' in the first moon, like the flower of the apricot in the second, and the flower of the peach-tree in the third? My dear precious jewel of a heart, a thousand, ten thousand greetings to you." It was the voice of a young woman, whose tender words were repeated by phonograph.

"Poor little younger sister," said Kin-Fo. Then opening the box, he took out from the apparatus the paper on which were the indented lines which had just reproduced the inflections of the absent voice, and replaced it with another.

Kin-Fo spoke in it for about a minute. By his voice, which was always calm and even, no one could recognize whether joy or sorrow influenced his thoughts. Kin-Fo spoke three or four sentences only. Having done this, the movement of the phonograph was suspended, he drew out the special paper on which the needle acting upon the membrane had traced oblique ridges, corresponding to the words spoken; then placing this paper in an envelope which he sealed, he wrote from right to left the following address:

"Madame Le-ou,
"Cha-Coua Avenue,
"Pekin."

An electric bell soon brought a domestic. Orders were given to him to take this letter immediately to the post-office.

An hour later Kin-Fo slept peacefully, pressing in his arms his "tchou-fou-jen"—a kind of pillow of plaited bamboo, which maintains a coolness, very much prized in warm latitudes.

CHAPTER IV
UNWELCOME TIDINGS

"You have no letter for me yet?"

"No, madame."

"How long the time appears to me, mother."

Thus spoke the charming Le-ou for the tenth time that day, in the boudoir of her house in Cha-Coua Avenue, Pekin. The old mother who answered her, and to whom she gave this appellation, usually bestowed in China on servants of a respectable age, was the grumbling and disagreeable Miss Nan.

Le-ou had married, when she was eighteen years of age, a learned man who had contributed to the famous work called "Sse-Khou-Tsuane-Chou," which was begun in the year 1773, and was to comprise 168,000 volumes, but up to the present time had only reached the 78,738th volume.

This learned man was twice her age, and died three years after this unequal union. The young widow was therefore left alone in the world when she was only twenty-one years old. Kin-Fo met her on a voyage which he made to Pekin about this time. Wang, who was acquainted with this

charming person, drew Kin-Fo's attention to her, who gradually allowed himself to fall into the idea of changing his condition in life by becoming the husband of the handsome young widow. Le-ou was not insensible to the proposition made to her, and it was in this way that the marriage was decided upon, which was to be celebrated as soon as Kin-Fo had made the necessary arrangements at Shang-Hai and Pekin.

It is not common in the Celestial Empire for widows to marry again, not that they do not wish it as much as the others of their sex in Western countries, but because the wish is not shared by the opposite sex. If Kin-Fo was an exception to the rule, it was because he was eccentric, we know.

Le-ou, if she married again, would no longer have the right to pass under the commemorative arches which the emperor has sometimes erected in honor of women who had been faithful to a deceased husband—such as the Widow Soung, who never would leave her husband's tomb; of the Widow Koung-Kiang, who cut off an arm; and of the Widow Yen-Tchiang, who disfigured herself as a sign of conjugal grief. But Le-ou believed she could put her twenty years to better use. She would again assume that life of obedience which constitutes the whole rôle of a woman in the Chinese family; she would renounce speaking of outside matters, and conform to the precepts of the book "Li-nun" on domestic virtues, and the book "Nei-tso-pien," on the duties of marriage, and she might again find that consideration which the wife enjoys among the upper classes. So Le-ou, who was intelligent and well educated, understanding what place she would hold in the life of the rich man, tired of the world, and feeling an affection for him, and a desire to prove to him that happiness still exists here below, was resigned to her new lot.

The first husband had left this young widow, at the time of his death, in easy but moderate circumstances. The house in Cha-Coua Avenue was a modest one. The insupportable Nan was the only servant; but Le-ou put up with her disagreeable manners, which is peculiar to the servants of the Empire of Flowers.

It was in her dressing-room that the young lady passed the most of her time, the furniture of which would have

seemed very plain were it not for the rich presents sent her for the past two months from Shang-Hai. A few pictures hung on the walls, and, among others, a valuable one by the old painter, Huan-Tse-Nen.

This young Le-ou was a charming woman even to European eyes. She was fair, and not yellow; she had sweet soft eyes, raised near the temples; black hair, ornamented with peach-blossoms, fastened by pins of green jade; small teeth; and eyebrows defined with a delicate line of India ink. She used no honey or Spanish-white on her cheeks, as the beauties in the Celestial Empire generally do. This young widow had nothing to do with these artificial ingredients. She seldom went out of her house at Cha-Coua, and for that reason disdained to use the mask, common among Chinese women when they go out.

As for her toilet, nothing could be more simple or elegant. A long robe, with a white embroidered galloon at the hem, and underneath this she wore a plaited skirt; at her waist a plastron, adorned with braid in gold filigree; pantaloons attached to the belt and fastened over hose of Nan-King silk; pretty slippers, ornamented with pearls, completed her attire. It wanted nothing more to make the young widow charming, unless we add that her hands were delicate, and that she preserved her nails, that were long and rosy, in little silver cases carved with exquisite art. Her feet? Well, her feet were small, not on account of any deformity in consequence of that barbarous custom among the Chinese which is happily being done away with, but because nature had made them so.

"It cannot be possible that a letter has not come to-day," said Le-ou again; "go and see, mother."

"I have been to see," replied Miss Nan, very disrespectfully, and left the room, grumbling.

Le-ou tried to work to divert her mind, but she was thinking of Kin-Fo all the time, since she was embroidering for him a pair of cloth socks, whose manufacture is altogether confined to Chinese women, to whatever class they may belong. But her work soon fell from her hands. She rose, took two or three watermelon seeds from a box, and cracked them between her pretty white teeth. She then opened a book called "Nushun," a code of instructions intended to be read by all good wives daily.

"As spring is the most favorable season for the farmer, so is the dawn the most propitious moment of the day.

"Rise early, and do not yield to the wooing of sleep.

"Take care of the mulberry-tree and the hemp.

"Spin silk and cotton zealously.

"A woman's virtue is in being industrious and economical.

"Your neighbor will sing your praises."

This book was soon closed, for the fond Le-ou was not thinking of what she was reading.

"Where is he?" she asked herself. "He must have gone to Canton. Has he returned to Shang-Hai? When will he come to Pekin? Has the sea been propitious to him? May the Goddess Koanine aid him!"

She wished a reaction to the anxiety which had taken possession of her whole being. Her lute was there, her fingers ran over the chords, while her lips murmured the first words of the song, "Hands United," but she could not continue. "His letters always came promptly," she thought to herself; "and when I read them how they move my soul. Now instead of letters addressed only to my eyes, I hear his voice itself."

Le-ou glanced at a phonograph which stood on a small table, and which was exactly like the one that Kin-Fo used at Shang-Hai. They could thus hear each other speak, in spite of the distance which separated them. But to-day, as for several days, the phonograph was silent, and said nothing of the thoughts of the absent one.

At this moment the old mother entered. "There is your letter," she said.

Nan went out after handing to Le-ou a letter post-marked Shang-Hai. A smile played on the lips of the young woman. Her eyes shone with a brilliant light. She tore open the envelope rapidly, without taking time to contemplate it, as was her custom.

It was not a letter which the envelope contained, but one of those oblique indented plates which, when adjusted in the phonograph, reproduce all the inflections of the human voice. "Ah! I like this even better," Le-ou cried, joyously, "for I can hear him speak."

The paper was placed on the roller of the phonograph, which a movement like clock-work turned, and

Le-ou putting her ear to it, heard a voice she well knew say:

"LITTLE YOUNGER SISTER—Ruin has carried away my riches, as the east wind blows away the yellow leaves of autumn. I do not wish to make another miserable by having her share my misery. Forget him on whom ten thousand misfortunes have fallen.

"Yours in despair,
"KIN-FO."

What a blow for the young woman! A life more bitter than the bitter gentian awaited her now. Yes, the golden wind carried her last hopes with the fortune of him she loved. The love which Kin-Fo had for her, had it forever gone away? Did her lover only believe in the happiness which riches gives? Ah, poor Le-ou! she now resembled a kite, when the string to which it is attached is broken, slowly she sank to the ground.

CHAPTER V
"THE CENTENARY"

THE following day the disdain for the things of this world did not leave Kin-Fo. With his usual pace, he left his home, crossed the river and directed his steps toward a handsome house standing between the Mission Church and the United States Consulate.

On the front of this house was a large copper plate, on which appeared this inscription:

THE CENTENARY LIFE INSURANCE COMPANY,
Guaranteed Capital, $20,000,000.
Principal Agent: WILLIAM J. BIDULPH.

Kin-Fo pushed open the door and found himself in an office divided into two compartments by a simple railing as high as his elbow. Several paper boxes, books with nickel clasps, an American safe with secret drawers, two or three tables, where the agent's clerks were working, and a secretary desk, which the Honorable William J. Bidulph

reserved for himself. This comprised the furniture of the office, which looked more like the office in a Broadway store than one on the shores of the Wousung.

William J. Bidulph was the principal agent in China of the fire and life insurance company, whose headquarters were in Chicago. It was called the "Centenary," a good sign to draw customers.

The Centenary was renowned in the United States, and had branches in the five divisions of the world. It did an extensive business, which was boldly and liberally carried on, and was thus able to take every risk.

The Celestials were beginning to follow this modern current of ideas, which filled the coffers of companies of this kind. A great number of houses in the Central Empire were insured against fire, and the insurance risks in case of death, with their combinations, did not want Chinese signatures. The guarantee of the Centenary was already posted on doors in Shang-Hai, and, among other places, on the pillars of Kin-Fo's costly yamen. It was not, therefore, with the intention of insuring against fire that Wang's pupil went to visit the Honorable William J. Bidulph.

"Mr. Bidulph?" he asked, on entering. William J. Bidulph was there "in person," like a photographer always at the disposition of the public. He was correctly dressed in a black coat and white cravat, with a full beard, and a peculiar American manner.

"To whom have I the honor of speaking?" asked William J. Bidulph.

"To Mr. Kin-Fo, of Shang-Hai."

"Mr. Kin-Fo, one of the clients of the Centenary—policy No. 27,200?"

"The same."

"Shall I have the pleasure, sir, of being able to render you any service?"

"I would like to speak to you in private," answered Kin-Fo. The conversation between these two persons could be easily carried on, since William J. Bidulph spoke Chinese as well as Kin-Fo spoke English.

The rich client was then introduced, with the respect which was due him, into an inner office, hung with tapestry, and closed with double doors, where one might have plotted the overthrow of the dynasty of Tsing without fear of

being heard by the most cunning tipaos in the Celestial Empire.

"Sir," said Kin-Fo, as soon as he was seated in a rocking-chair before a fireplace heated with gas, "I desire to negotiate with your company for the insurance of my life."

"Sir," answered William J. Bidulph, "there is nothing more simple. Two signatures, yours and mine, at the foot of a policy, and the insurance is effected, after a few preliminary formalities. But, sir, permit me to ask this question: Of course you desire to die at an advanced age—a very natural desire always?"

"Why?" asked Kin-Fo. "Ordinarily, life insurance indicates a fear of approaching death."

"Oh, sir," answered William J. Bidulph, in the most serious way in the world, "that fear is never entertained by the patrons of the Centenary. Does not its name indicate this? To be insured with us, is to take a long lease of life. I beg your pardon, but it is seldom that our insured do not pass their hundredth year—very rare, very rare. In their interest we ought to deprive them of life. But we do a superb business. I assure you, sir, that to be insured in the Centenary is a sure way to become a centenarian."

"Ah!" said Kin-Fo, quietly, looking at William J. Bidulph with his cold eye. The chief agent, as serious as a minister, had not the appearance of joking.

"However that may be," replied Kin-Fo, "I wish to insure my life for $200,000."

"We will say a policy for $200,000," answered William J. Bidulph, as he wrote this figure on a memorandum. The magnitude of the amount did not even cause him to raise his eyebrows.

"Against what risks do you intend to take an insurance, my dear sir?"

"All."

"The risks of travel by sea and land, and those of a residence outside of the limits of the Celestial Empire?"

"Yes."

"The risks of military service?"

"Yes."

"Then the premiums will be very high."

"I will pay what is necessary."

"It is agreed."

"But," added Kin-Fo, "there is another very important risk of which you do not speak."

"What is it?"

"Suicide. I thought the policies of the Centenary allowed insurance against suicide."

"Just so! just so!" replied William J. Bidulph, rubbing his hands. "That is also a source of profit to us. You can rest assured that our clients are generally men who cling to life, and those who from excessive prudence insure against suicide never kill themselves."

"For all that," answered Kin-Fo, "for personal reasons I wish to insure against this risk also."

"Just as you wish, but the premium will be very high."

"I say, again, that I will pay whatever is necessary."

"I understand. We will therefore say," said William J. Bidulph, continuing to write on his memorandum, "risks of traveling by sea and land, and suicide."

"And on those conditions, what will the premiums to be paid amount to?" asked Kin-Fo.

"My dear sir," answered the principal agent, "our premiums are based on a mathematical precision which does honor to the Company. They are no longer, as formerly, on Duvillar's tables. Are you acquainted with Duvillar?"

"I never knew him."

"He was a remarkable statistician, but ancient, so ancient even that he is dead. At the time that he established his famous tables, which still serve as the scale for premiums in the most of the European companies which are behind the times, the average duration of life was less than it is at present, thanks to the general progress. We make a basis on a higher medium, and consequently more favorable to the insured, who pays less and lives longer."

"What will be the amount of my premium?" asked Kin-Fo, desirous of stopping the wordy agent.

"Sir," answered William J. Bidulph, "may I take the liberty of asking how old you are?"

"Thirty-one years."

"Well, at thirty-one, if it were only for ordinary risks, you would have to pay other companies two eighty-three per cent., but in the Centenary it would only be two seventy,

which would annually make $5,400 on a capital of $200,000."

"And on the terms that I desire," said Kin-Fo, "insuring against every risk, even suicide—suicide above everything?"

"Sir," answered William J. Bidulph, in an amiable tone, after having consulted a printed table, "we cannot do this for you at less than twenty-five per cent."

"Which will be?"

"Fifty thousand dollars."

"And how do you wish the premium to be paid to you?"

"All at once, or in parts by the month, at the pleasure of the insured."

"Which would be for the first two months?"

"Eight thousand three hundred and thirty-two dollars, which, if paid to-day, the 30th of April," answered William J. Bidulph, "would cover you up to the 30th of June of the present year."

"Sir," answered Kin-Fo, "these conditions suit me—here is the premium for the first two months"; and he placed on the table a thick roll of bills which he drew from his pocket.

"Well, sir, very well," answered William J. Bidulph; "but, before signing the policy, there is one formality to be gone through with."

"What is it?"

"You must receive a visit from the physician of the Company."

"What is the object of the visit?"

"In order to see if you are in sound health, and that you have no organic complaint of a nature to shorten life—if, in short, you can give us guarantees of a long life."

"For what reason, since I insure even against duel and suicide?" observed Kin-Fo.

"Well, my dear sir," replied William J. Bidulph, still smiling, "a malady, the germ of which you might have, and which would carry you off in a few months, would cost us, in all, $200,000."

"My suicide would cost you that also, I suppose?" asked Kin-Fo.

"My dear sir," answered the principal agent, taking Kin-Fo's hand in his, "I have already had the pleasure of telling

you that many of our clients insure against suicide, but they never commit suicide; besides, we are not prevented from watching over them,—but with the greatest discretion."

"Ah!" said Kin-Fo.

"I will also add," said William J. Bidulph, "that all the clients of the Centenary insured against the risk of suicide are the ones who pay premiums the longest; but, between ourselves, why should the rich Mr. Kin-Fo contemplate suicide?"

"And why should the rich Mr. Kin-Fo get insured?"

"Oh," answered William J. Bidulph, "to be certain of living to be very old as a client of the Centenary." There was no use discussing with the principal agent of the celebrated Company—he was so positive in what he said.

"And now," he added, "for whose benefit is this insurance of $200,000 to be made?"

"There will be two beneficiaries," answered Kin-Fo, "one for $50,000 and the other for $150,000."

"We will say for the $50,000?"

"Mr. Wang."

"What! the philosopher Wang?"

"The same."

"And for the $150,000?"

"Madame Le-ou, of Pekin."

"Pekin," added William J. Bidulph, finishing his entry of the names of the beneficiaries. Then he resumed:

"What is Madame Le-ou's age?"

"Twenty-one," answered Kin-Fo.

"Oh," said the agent, "a young lady who will be quite old when she receives the amount of the policy."

"Why so, please?"

"Because you will live to be more than a hundred years of age, my dear sir. And about the philosopher, Wang—what age is he?"

"He is fifty-five."

"Well, this amiable man is sure of never receiving anything."

"That is to be seen, sir," said Kin-Fo, directing his steps toward the office door.

"Good-day," answered the Honorable William J. Bidulph, bowing to the new client of the Centenary.

The following day the doctor of the Company made Kin-

Fo the usual visit. His report was: "A body of iron, muscles of steel, and lungs like organ bellows."

There was now nothing to prevent the Company from dealing with a man so solidly built. The policy was then signed. Neither Le-ou nor Wang, unless through unforeseen circumstances, would ever know what Kin-Fo had just done for them, until the day when the Centenary should be called to pay them the policy, the last generous act of the ex-millionaire.

CHAPTER VI

PREPARING FOR DEATH

The $200,000 of the Centenary was in a very perilous condition, notwithstanding what the Honorable William J. Bidulph might think and say. Kin-Fo's scheme was not of that kind that on reflection one postpones indefinitely.

Completely ruined, Wang's pupil formally determined to end his existence, which, even in the time of his riches, brought him only sadness and weariness. The letter delivered by Soun, eight days after its arrival, had come from San Francisco. It gave notice of the suspension of payment of the Central Bank of California. Now Kin-Fo's fortune consisted almost entirely, as we know, of stock in this celebrated bank; and improbable as the news might appear, it was too true. The suspension of payment of the Central Bank of California was confirmed by the newspapers at Shang-Hai. The failure had been declared, and the fall in the stock had ruined Kin-Fo.

The sale of his house at Shang-Hai would not yield him a sufficient income. The $8,000 premium paid to the Centenary, and some boat stock of the Tien-Tsin Company, which, if sold that day would hardly amount to anything worth while, now comprised his whole fortune.

A Western man, a Frenchman, or an Englishman, would have taken this new state of existence philosophically, and sought to have got up in the world again, by labor; but a Celestial believes that he has the right to think otherwise, and to act differently. It was voluntary death that Kin-Fo, like a true Chinaman, was going to, with that typical indifference characteristic of the yellow race.

The Chinaman has only a passive courage, but he possesses it in the highest degree. His indifference to death is truly extraordinary. When ill, he sees it approach with indifference. When condemned to death, and already in the hands of the executioner, he shows no signs of fear. The public executions, so frequent, the sight of horrible suffering, which are part of the penal laws in the Celestial Empire, have early made familiar to the Sons of Heaven the idea of abandoning without regret the things of this world; besides, it is not to be wondered at, since in all families this thought of death is a topic of conversation almost daily, which has its influence over the most ordinary acts of life. The worship of ancestors is found even among the poorest people. There is not a rich dwelling where there is not reserved a sort of domestic sanctuary, and there is not a miserable hut where may not be found some corner religiously kept apart for the relics of ancestors, in whose honor a day is celebrated in the second month. That is why one finds in the same shop, where children's cradles and wedding gifts are sold, a varied assortment of coffins, which form an article of Chinese commerce.

The furniture would be incomplete if a coffin were wanting in the mansion. The son considers it a duty to offer one to his father while living, and it is considered a great proof of tenderness. This coffin is placed in a special chamber. It is ornamented and taken care of; and when it has received the mortal remains, it is kept for many years with pious care. In short, respect for the dead is the basis of Chinese religion, and contributes to bind the family ties more closely.

Kin-Fo, therefore, more than any other person, owing to his temperament, looked with tranquillity at the thought of putting an end to his days. He had insured the fate of the two beings in whom all his affections centered. What had he to regret now? Nothing. Suicide could not cause him any remorse. What is a crime in Western civilized countries, is nothing more than a lawful act, we might say, in the midst of that strange civilization of Eastern Asia.

Kin-Fo had made up his mind, and no influence could change him from putting it into execution, not even the influence of the philosopher Wang. Besides, the latter was in absolute ignorance of his pupil's designs. Soun was no

wiser, and only observed one thing since his master's return; that was, that Kin-Fo showed himself more patient toward him, in not finding fault with his daily blunders.

Decidedly, Soun was arriving at the conclusion that he could not find a better master, and his precious pigtail wriggled on his back with security.

A Chinese proverb says:

"To be happy on earth, you must live at Canton, and die at Liao-Tcheou."

It is at Canton that every luxury of life is found, and it is at Liao-Tcheou that the best coffins are manufactured.

Kin-Fo did not fail to leave an order with the best house, that his last bed of repose might arrive in time. To be properly laid out for his last sleep is the constant thought of every Celestial who knows how to live.

At the same time Kin-Fo bought a white cock, whose part is to embody departing spirits, and seize in their flight one of the seven elements of which a Chinese soul is composed.

We see that if the pupil of the philosopher Wang showed himself indifferent to the details of life, he was much less so to those of death. He had to arrange the program for his funeral, and on that very day a beautiful sheet of paper, called rice paper, received Kin-Fo's last will.

After having bequeathed to the young widow his house at Shang-Hai, and to Wang a portrait of the Emperor Taiping, which the philosopher always regarded favorably. Kin-Fo wrote with a firm hand the order of march of the persons who were to assist at his obsequies.

In default of relations, of which he had none, he wished a party of friends, which he had, to appear at the head of the funeral procession, dressed in white, which is the mourning color of the Celestial Empire. Along the length of the streets as far as the tomb, which had been erected some time ago in the suburbs of Shang-Hai, were to extend a double row of servants charged with the burial. Then the hearse was to appear. It was an enormous palanquin, hung in violet silk, and embroidered with gold dragons, which fifty valets were to carry on their shoulders in the middle of a double row of bonzes. The priests, dressed in robes of gray, red, and yellow, reciting the last prayers, alternated with the thunder of gongs, the playing of flutes,

and the noisy din of trumpets, six feet long, were to follow. At last the mourners' carriages, draped in white, were to close this sumptuous funeral procession, the expenses of which must exhaust the last resources of the opulent defunct. This program was really nothing very extraordinary: many funerals of this class pass through the streets of Canton, Shang-Hai, or Pekin, and the Celestials see nothing more than a natural homage given to the remains of him who is no more.

On the 20th of October a box, sent from Liao-Tcheou, arrived to the address of Kin-Fo, at his dwelling in Shang-Hai. It contained the coffin he had ordered, carefully packed. Neither Wang nor Soun, nor any of the servants in the yamen were surprised; for, we repeat, that there is not a Chinaman who is not anxious to possess in his lifetime the bed on which he is to sleep for eternity.

A letter had arrived that day from the desolate Le-ou—the young widow placed at the disposal of Kin-Fo the little that she possessed. Fortune was nothing to her; she could do without it. She loved him, and what did he want more? Could they not be happy in more modest circumstances? This letter, full of sincere affection, did not alter Kin-Fo's resolution. "My death alone can enrich her," he thought.

It only remained to decide in what way he should accomplish this last supreme act. Kin-Fo felt a sort of pleasure in planning the details, for he was in hopes that at the last moment an emotion, however fleeting as it might be, would make his heart beat.

Within the inclosure of the yamen rose four pretty kiosks, ornamented with all the fancy characteristic of Chinese decorations. They bore significant names, such as the "Pavilion of Happiness," which Kin-Fo never entered; the "Pavilion of Fortune," which he looked upon with disdain; the "Pavilion of Pleasure," the doors of which were now closed to him; the "Pavilion of Long Life," which he had resolved to destroy.

It was this last one that instinct led him to choose. He resolved to shut himself up in it at nightfall, and it was there, the following day, they were to find him happy in death. This point decided, how was he to die? Rip himself open like a Japanese? strangle himself with a silk cord like

a mandarin? open his veins in a perfumed bath like an epicurean in ancient Rome? No. These proceedings had something brutal in them, and would be painful to his friends and servants. One or two grains of opium, mixed with some subtle poison, would be sufficient to make him pass from this world into the other without his being conscious of the change, carried in one of those dreams which converts slumber into eternal sleep.

The sun was beginning to sink below the horizon when Kin-Fo had only a few hours to live. He wished to take a last promenade and see the country once more around Shang-Hai, and the shores of the Houang-Pou, on which he had so often walked away his weariness. He left the yamen to return once more, and never leave it again.

The English territory, the little bridge over the creek, the French Concession, were crossed in an indolent manner, as he saw no necessity to hasten in this last hour. Passing along the wharf of the native port, he wound around the wall of Shang-Hai as far as the Roman Catholic Cathedral, whose cupola overlooks the southern suburbs. He then turned to the right, and quietly ascended the road which leads to the pagoda at Loung-Hao.

Kin-Fo was not a man who looked around him; so that two strangers dressed like Europeans, who had followed him when he left the yamen, did not even attract his attention. He did not see them, although they never lost sight of him. They walked at some distance behind him, walking when he walked, and stopping when he stopped. It was plain they were there to watch him. They were of medium height, and one would have said that they were like two pointer dogs with sharp eyes and fleet limbs.

Kin-Fo, after walking about a league around the country, retraced his steps. The two bloodhounds also retraced theirs.

Kin-Fo, on his return, saw two or three beggars, to whom he gave alms. Farther on several Chinese Christians, trained in their devotions by the French Sisters of Charity, crossed the road. Each was carrying a basket on her back, in which were contained some abandoned children. They have been appropriately called "the children's rag-pickers." And these unfortunate children, what are they but rags thrown in the gutter? Kin-Fo emptied his purse into the

hands of these charitable sisters. They were surprised at this act on the part of a Celestial.

It was now evening, and Kin-Fo took the road by the wharf, to return to his home at Shang-Hai. The floating population were still astir, and singing and noise were heard everywhere. Kin-Fo listened; he was anxious to hear the last words that would fall on his ears.

A young Tankadere, guiding her boat through the somber waters of the Houang-Pou, sang thus:

"I deck my boat with a thousand flowers,
Counting the hours;
My prayers to the blue-god ever rise
Homeward to turn my lover's eyes;
My soul impassion'd ever cries,
Will he come to-morrow?"

"To-morrow!" thought Kin-Fo to himself; "where shall I be to-morrow?"

"I know not what land of cold or drought
His steps have sought;
Roaming beyond old China's wall
Heedless what perils may befall;
Ah! could he hear my heart-sick call—
He would come to-morrow.

To seek for wealth, O, why didst thou stay
Far, far away?
Why dost thou tarry! the months glide by,
Waiteth the priest the bands to tie,
Phœnix to phœnix ever nigh;
Come, O come to-morrow!"

The voice died away in the distance. Kin-Fo thought to himself, "Yes, perhaps riches are not everything in this world; but life is not worth living."

Half an hour afterward he entered his dwelling. The two strangers, who were following him up to that time, had to stop.

Kin-Fo quietly walked to the kiosk of "Long Life," opened the door and closed it again, and was alone in a little room lighted by a lantern which shed a soft glow around. On a table, which was made of a single piece of jade, stood a box containing a few grains of opium, mixed with a deadly poison, which Kin-Fo always had on hand in case of need. He took up two of these grains, placed

them in one of those red-clay pipes which opium-eaters use, and began to light it.

"Why, how is this," said he, "not even an emotion at the moment when I am about to sleep never to rise again."

He hesitated a moment. "No," he cried, throwing the pipe away, which broke on the inlaid floor, "I must have some emotion, even if it be feeble. I must have it—and I will have it."

And leaving the kiosk with a quicker step than ordinary, he walked toward Wang's room.

CHAPTER VII

A SERIOUS CONTRACT PROPOSITION

WANG had not yet gone to bed. He was lying on a divan; he was reading the last issue of the Pekin *Gazette*. When his eyebrows contracted, it was very certain that the paper paid some compliment to the reigning dynasty of Tsing.

Kin-Fo opened the door, entered the room, threw himself in an arm-chair, and said, "Wang, I have come to ask a favor of you."

"Ten thousand are at your service," answered the philosopher, letting fall the paper. "Speak—speak—my son, speak, without fear, and whatever it is, I will do it."

"The service which I require," said Kin-Fo, "is one of that kind that a friend can render but once; after that I will excuse you from the nine thousand nine hundred and ninety-nine others; but I must add that you are not to expect any thanks from me afterward."

"The most able interpreter of inexplicable things could not understand you—what is it?"

"Wang," said Kin-Fo, "I am ruined."

"Ah! ah!" said the philosopher, with the tone of a man who has heard good rather than bad news.

"The letter which I found here on our return from Canton," said Kin-Fo, "has apprised me that the Central Bank of California has failed. Outside of this yamen and a few thousand dollars, which may enable me to live one or two months longer, I have nothing left."

"Then,," said Wang, after looking at his pupil, "it is no longer the rich Kin-Fo to whom I am speaking."

"It is the poor Kin-Fo, whom poverty has never frightened."

"Well answered, my son," said the philosopher, rising. "I have not, therefore, lost my time in inculcating to you those lessons of wisdom. Thus far you have only vegetated without passions or struggles. You will live now. Confucius has said, and the Talmud after him, 'That there are fewer misfortunes than one fears.' We shall now earn our daily rice. The 'Nun-Schum' teaches us that 'In life there are ups and downs.' The wheel of fortune is continually turning, and the spring wind is variable. Rich or poor, try to do your duty. Let us go."

And Wang, like a true philosopher, was about to quit the sumptuous habitation. Kin-Fo stopped him.

"I said," he resumed, "that poverty has never frightened me, but I will add that I have decided not to endure it."

"Ah!" said Wang, "what do you intend?"

"To die."

"Not to die," quietly answered the philosopher. "A man who has decided to end life says nothing to anybody."

"It would have been done already," replied Kin-Fo, with a calm equal to that of the philosopher, "had I not wished that my death should cause me at least one first and last emotion. Now, at the moment I was about to swallow one of those grains of opium that you know about, my heart beat so slow that I threw the poison away, and I have come to find you."

"Do you then wish, my friend, that we should die together?" asked Wang, smiling.

"No," said Kin-Fo; "I wish you to live."

"Why?"

"To kill me with your own hand."

At this unexpected proposition Wang did not even shudder, but Kin-Fo, who looked at him steadily in the face, saw a light in his eyes. The old Tai-ping was awakened in him; eighteen years had passed over his head without stifling the sanguinary instincts of his youth. To the son of him who had protected him he would not object to putting him out of existence, if he desired it. Yes, he, Wang the philosopher, would do this.

But this light in his eyes died out very soon. Wang assumed the usual look of a worthy man, a little more serious perhaps, and settling down again, he said, "And is this the favor that you ask of me?"

"Yes," replied Kin-Fo; "and the performance of this service will acquit you from all you owe to Tchoung-Heou and his son."

"What do you want to do?" simply asked the philosopher.

"On the 25th of June, the 28th of the 6th moon, which will be my 31st birthday, I wish to have ceased to live. I must fall by your hand, not knowing where or how. In each of the eighty thousand minutes which will remain to me of life, during the fifty-five days yet remaining, I must be filled with the thought, the hope, and the fear that my life will suddenly end. I must have before me those eighty thousand emotions, so plain, that, when the seven elements of my soul separate, I can cry out, 'At last I have lived!'"

Kin-Fo, contrary to his habit, had spoken with a certain animation, and it will be noticed that he had fixed on the sixth day before the expiration of his policy as the limit of his existence. This was acting like a prudent man, for in default of the payment of a new premium, a delay would cause his heirs to lose the insurance.

The philosopher listened gravely, casting a look at the portrait of the Tai-ping which he was to inherit, although he was not aware of it.

"You will not decline to fulfill the obligation you have promised, to give me the blow?" asked Kin-Fo.

Wang, with a gesture, indicated that he was ready. He had seen too many killed while fighting under the banners of the Tai-pings, but he added,"Do you thus renounce the chances that the True Master has given you to reach extreme old age?"

"I renounce them."

"Without any regrets?"

"Without a regret," answered Kin-Fo. "What! to be old, and resemble a piece of wood which can no longer be carved. If I do not desire to live *rich,* I should desire it less *poor.*"

"And the young widow at Pekin," said Wang. "Do you forget the old proverb, 'Flowers with flowers; the wil-

low with the willow; the union of two hearts makes a hundred years of spring?'"

"Against three hundred years of autumn, summer, and winter," replied Kin-Fo, shrugging his shoulders. "No; if Le-ou were poor, she would be miserable with me. On the contrary, my death will assure her a fortune."

"Have you done that?"

"Yes; and you, Wang, have $50,000 placed on my head."

"Ah!" simply replied the philosopher, "you answer every question."

"Yes, to every one, even to an objection which you have not yet made."

"What is it?"

"The danger which may follow, after my death, of your being suspected as my assassin."

"Oh," replied Wang; "it is only the blunderers and the cowards who allow themselves to be taken; besides, where would the merit be of rendering you this last service if I risked nothing?"

"None at all, Wang; but I prefer to give you security in that respect, and no one will ever dream of disturbing you."

Saying this, Kin-Fo approached a table, took up a sheet of paper, and, in clear handwriting, wrote the following lines:

"I have voluntarily killed myself through disgust and weariness of life. KIN-FO."

He gave the paper to Wang. The philosopher read it in a low voice at first, then aloud; and, after doing this, he carefully folded it and placed it in his memorandum-book. Another gleam came into his eyes.

"Is this all serious on your part?" said he, regarding his pupil fixedly.

"Yes, serious."

"It will be no less serious on my part, then."

"Then before the 25th of June, at the latest, I shall have ceased to live."

"I do not know whether you will have ceased to live in the way that you understand it," replied the philosopher, gravely; "but you can rest assured you will be dead."

"Thank you, and good-by, Wang."

"Farewell, Kin-Fo."

And Kin-Fo quietly left the chamber of the philosopher.

CHAPTER VIII

SUSPENSE

"WELL, Craig-Fry?" said the Hon. William J. Bidulph, the following day, to the two agents whom he had commissioned to watch the movements of the new client of the Centenary.

"Well," answered Craig, "we followed him yesterday during a long walk——"

"And," added Fry, "he certainly has not the appearance of a man who contemplates suicide. When night came we saw him to his own door, but which, unfortunately, we could not enter."

"And this morning?" asked William J. Bidulph.

"We learned," answered Craig, "that he was as safe as the bridge of Palikao."

The agents, Craig and Fry, were two pure-blooded American, two cousins, in the employ of the Centenary, who might be taken for twins. They were so identified, that when one commenced a sentence, the other usually finished it. They had the same brain, the same thought, heart, stomach, and the same way of doing everything. It was four hands, arms, and legs united in one body. In a word, they were like the Siamese twins.

"Then," asked William J. Bidulph, "you have not yet been able to penetrate into the house?"

"Not—" said Craig

"Yet," said Fry.

"It may be difficult," replied the principal agent; "but it must be done; it is of importance that the Centenary not only earns the enormous premium, but it is of greater importance to save $200,000. Therefore, there are two months of watching, and perhaps more, if our new client renews his policy."

"There is a servant—" said Craig.

"Whom we might bribe—" said Fry

"Ah," said Bidulph, "stick to the servant—buy him. He must be sensible to the sound of taels; and taels you

shall not want, even although you may have to exhaust the three thousand formalities of civility which Chinese etiquette requires. You will not regret the pains you have taken."

"It shall be—" said Craig.

"Done," replied Fry. And those were the reasons why Craig and Fry wished to put themselves on a familiar footing with Soun. Now, Soun was not a man to resist taels, with the courteous offer of several glasses of American liquor.

Craig and Fry soon learned from Soun all that they wished to know for their interest, which amounted to this: Had Kin-Fo changed his style of living? No; except that he scolded his valet less, that the scissors were not used so often to cut off his pigtail, and that the rattan was used less on his shoulders. Had Kin-Fo any deadly weapon about him? No; for he did not belong to that respectable category of amateurs who use deadly weapons. What did he eat at his meals? Some simple dishes. Did he rise early? At five o'clock. Did he go to bed early? At ten o'clock, which was his custom since Soun had known him. Was he sad, preoccupied, or wearied with life? He was not a very cheerful man, indeed. Oh, no! Nevertheless, some days he enjoyed the things of this life. Yes—Soun found him less indifferent, like a man who is waiting—for what?—he could not tell.

Finally, did his master possess any poisonous substance which he could use? He had none any longer, for that very morning they had thrown by his orders into the Houang-Pou a dozen of little globules which were poisonous.

In all this, there was nothing to alarm the principal agent of the Centenary. No. The rich Kin-Fo, whose circumstances no one except Wang was aware of, appeared to enjoy life. However this may be, Craig and Fry were to continue to make inquiries about everything their client did. Thus the two inseparables continued to question Soun, who took pleasure in conversing with such amiable men.

It would be going too far to say that the hero of this story clung to life more tenaciously since his resolution to get rid of it; but he did not want for emotions. He had placed Damocles' sword over his head, and this sword was sure to fall on him some day. Was it to be to-day, or to-morrow? this morning, or this evening? On this point there

was some doubt, and hence a movement of the heart, new to him. Besides, since the exchange of words between him and Wang, he saw less of him. Either the philosopher left the house oftener than he was accustomed, or he shut himself up in his room. Kin-Fo did not go in search of him; that was not his place, and he was ignorant of how Wang passed his time. Perhaps, in preparing some ambush for him. An old Tai-ping must have a great many ways of dispatching a man. From this Kin-Fo's curiosity was aroused; a new element of interest was afforded him. However, the master and pupil met at the same table; but there was no allusion made to their future position of assassin and assassinated—they talked about other things. Wang was more serious than usual, often turned his eyes away, and seemed to be more preoccupied. The man who was so communicative had now become silent and sad. A great eater formerly, like every philosopher who has a good stomach, the most delicate dishes did not tempt him, and the wine no longer consoled him.

Kin-Fo tried to put him at his ease. He tasted of every dish, and it followed that he ate more than usual; hence a new sensation, and he relished his dinners, which agreed with him; it could not be that Wang intended to poison him. He afforded Wang every facility to accomplish his deed. Kin-Fo left his chamber door open, that the philosopher might enter and deal the fatal blow while he was awake or asleep; all that Kin-Fo expected was, that his hand might be swift, and the blow fatal. But his emotions were changing; and after the first few nights he was so accustomed to expect the fatal blow, that he slept soundly and awoke every morning fresh and bright. Things could not always remain thus.

The thought often occurred to Kin-Fo, that Wang would hesitate before killing him in the house where he had been so hospitably entertained. He resolved to put him more at his ease on that point, and we find him running about the country, seeking isolated roads, staying out late in the worst places in Shang-Hai, where robbery and murders were committed daily. He walked through the streets at all hours of the night, jostled by drunken men of all nations, but he was safe and sound. He did not see Craig and Fry, who followed him everywhere, ready to give him help in case

of need. If matters went on in this way, Kin-Fo would get accustomed to this new mode of existence, and perhaps weariness would return.

One day chance aroused a new sensation in him. He passed the door of the philosopher's room. Wang was trying the point of a dagger, and wetting it with some liquid in a blue glass bottle. As Kin-Fo glanced into the room the philosopher brandished the dagger around, in order to try it. Kin-Fo's face changed at the sight of this, and the blood mounted to his eyes; he thought to himself, "this is the day in which he is to perform the deed." He discreetly retired, without being seen or heard. Kin-Fo did not leave his room the rest of the day, nor did the philosopher make his appearance either. Kin-Fo went to bed as usual, and rose next morning as a healthy man does.

Ten days had now elapsed, but Wang had two months still to perform his promise. "I have given him more time than is necessary," said Kin-Fo; and he feared that Wang had repented of his promise.

Kin-Fo observed, however, that the philosopher made more visits than usual to the ancestor's room, where the coffin was stored, and he was delighted to hear from Soun than Wang had ordered him to brush and clean it, and keep it in readiness.

The 13th, 14th, and 15th of May passed. There was nothing new.

Did Wang intend to let the time pass, and only pay his debt when it was due, as is the custom with merchants? In that case there would be no emotion or surprise for Kin-Fo.

A significant occurrence came to the knowledge of Kin-Fo on the morning of the 16th of May, about six o'clock. He had had a bad night, and, on waking, was still under the influence of a horrid dream. Prince Ien, the sovereign judge of the Chinese hell, had condemned him not to appear before him until the twelfth-hundreth moon should rise above the horizon of the Celestial Empire. A century still to live—a whole century!

Kin-Fo was therefore in bad humor, for he believed everything was conspiring against him, and when Soun came to assist him to dress, he accosted him angrily: "Go to the devil."

"No," answered Soun, "not before I have told you."

"What?"

"That Mr. Wang——"

"Wang!—what has Wang done?" said Kin-Fo, seizing Soun by his pigtail. "What has he done?"

"My master," answered Soun, who wriggled like a worm, "he has ordered us to carry your coffin into the 'Pavilion of Long Life,' and——"

"Has he done that?" cried Kin-Fo, whose face lighted up. "Go, Soun—go, my friend! Stop; here are ten taels; and be careful to execute all Wang's orders."

Thereupon Soun was astonished, and repeated to himself:

"Decidedly, master is crazy; but at least he is generous."

This time Kin-Fo did not doubt that the Tai-ping intended to give the fatal blow in the "Pavilion of Long Life," where he himself had determined to die. The catastrophe was now approaching. How long the day appeared to Kin-Fo. Finally the sun disappeared, and the shadows of night surrounded the yamen.

Kin-Fo went to the pavilion in the hope of never leaving it alive. He extended himself on a soft divan, which seemed to be made for long repose, and he waited. Then the recollections of his useless life passed before his mind—his weariness, his disgust, all that riches could not conquer, and all that poverty might have increased.

One bright light illumined his life, which had no attraction during his opulence: it was the affection which he felt for the young widow. This sentiment moved his heart when it was about ceasing to beat. What! make poor Le-ou as miserable as himself—never!

The fourth period, which precedes the dawn, passed, causing Kin-Fo the liveliest emotions. He listened anxiously. He tried to hear the least noise, while his eyes looked into the darkness. More than once he thought he heard the door open, pushed by some prudent hand. He thought without doubt that Wang hoped to find him asleep, and would strike him in his sleep. Then a reaction took place in him; he feared and desired at the same time this visit of the Tai-ping. The dawn appeared, and the day was slowly approaching. Suddenly the door was opened; Kin-Fo arose, having lived in this last second more than he had done in his whole lifetime.

Soun was before him, with a letter in his hand. "In great haste," Soun simply said.

Kin-Fo took the letter, which bore the San Francisco post-mark. He opened the envelope, read it rapidly, and rushed out of the "Pavilion of Long Life."

"Wang, Wang!" he cried. In an instant he flung open the door and was in the philosopher's room.

Wang was not there. Wang had not slept in the house. The servants, on hearing Kin-Fo's cries, ran to him; they searched the yamen, but it was evident that Wang had disappeared without leaving any traces.

CHAPTER IX

INVERTED CIRCUMSTANCES

"Yes, Mr. Bidulph, a simple stock-jobbing operation, in the American style," said Kin-Fo to the principal agent of the insurance company.

The Honorable William J. Bidulph laughed with the aid of a connoisseur, and observed: "It was indeed well played for everybody was taken in."

"My own correspondent even," remarked Kin-Fo; "for eight days afterward they paid with open doors; there was no failure, the news was false, but the deed was done, and the stock, which had depreciated eight per cent., was bought in by the Central Bank at the lowest rate; and when the director was asked the cause of the failure, he answered amiably, 'One hundred and seventy-five per cent.' This is what my correspondent writes me in the letter I received this morning, at the moment when I thought myself absolutely ruined."

"Did you have any idea of taking your own life?" cried William J. Bidulph.

"No," answered Kin-Fo; "but I thought I might be assassinated."

"Assassinated?"

"By my written authority—an assassination agreed upon, and which would have cost you——"

"Two hundred thousand dollars," answered Mr. Bidulph, "since all risks against death were taken. Ah, we should have regretted your loss, my dear sir."

"On account of the amount?"

Mr. Bidulph took his client's hand and shook it cordially in the American style. "But I do not understand you," he added.

"You will understand," replied Kin-Fo; and he told him of the engagement entered into by him with a man in whom he had confidence, and who guaranteed every immunity. The grave feature was that the promise would be fulfilled; the pledge would be kept, without the shadow of a doubt.

"Is this man a friend?" asked the agent.

"He is," answered Kin-Fo; "and my death is worth $50,000 to him."

"Fifty thousand dollars!" cried Mr. Bidulph. "Then it is Mr. Wang?"

"The same."

"A philosopher! He would never kill you."

Kin-Fo was about to say, "This philosopher is an old Tai-ping. During the half of his life he has committed more murders than would ruin the Centenary if they had been insured there. For the last eighteen years his ferocious instincts have been restrained. Now the opportunity is offered him, and he believes me to be ruined and determined to die, and knowing that he will get a small fortune by my death, he will not hesitate."

Kin-Fo said nothing of this, however, for it would compromise Wang, whom, perhaps, William J. Bidulph would not have hesitated to denounce to the governor of the province as a former Tai-ping. That would have saved Kin-Fo, no doubt, but Wang would have been lost.

"Well," said the agent, "there is a simple thing to do."

"What is it?"

"You must tell Mr. Wang that the contract is broken, and get back the compromising letter."

"That is easier said than done," answered Kin-Fo. "Wang has disappeared since yesterday, and no one knows his whereabouts."

"Ah!" said the agent, rather perplexed. "And now, my dear sir, you no longer wish to die," he said, looking at Kin-Fo.

"No," he answered. "The stroke of the Central Bank in California has doubled my fortune, and I am going to

get married. But I must find Wang first; the time agreed upon has not yet expired."

"When does it expire?"

"On the 25th of June. And during the interval the Centenary runs great risk, and it should take measures in consequence."

"And find the philosopher," said the Honorable William J. Bidulph.

He promenaded up and down with his hands behind his back, then said, "Well, we will find this man, even if he is hidden in the bowels of the earth; and until then we shall prevent any attempt at assassination, as we have prevented you from committing suicide."

"What do you mean?" asked Kin-Fo.

"This: that since the day the policy was signed, the 30th of April last, two of my detectives have followed you and watched your movements."

"I have not observed them."

"Ah, they are discreet men. I should like to introduce them to you, now there is no necessity to hide their movements unless from Mr. Wang."

"Certainly," answered Kin-Fo.

"Craig-Fry should be here since you are here," and William J. Bidulph cried out, "Craig-Fry!"

Craig and Fry were indeed there behind the door of the private office. They had tracked Kin-Fo to the Centenary office, and were waiting for him.

Now, there were two courses, as the Hon. William J. Bidulph observed. The detectives must remain carefully shut up in Kin-Fo's house at Shang-Hai, so that Wang could not enter without their knowledge, or else find Wang, who must be made to give up the letter, which must be considered null and void.

"The first plan is of no use," said Kin-Fo. "Wang knows how to come to me without being seen, since my house is this; he must be found at any cost."

"You are right, sir," answered William J. Bidulph. "The surest way is to find Wang—and he must be found."

"Dead or—" said Craig.

"Alive," concluded Fry.

"No, living," cried Kin-Fo. "I do not intend that Wang shall be in danger a moment through my fault."

"Craig and Fry," added William J. Bidulph, "you are responsible for our client for seventy-seven days longer, and until the 30th of next June he will be worth to us two hundred thousand dollars."

Thereupon the client and the principal agent of the Centenary took leave of each other. Ten minutes later, Kin-Fo, escorted by his two body-guards, who were not to leave him again, entered the yamen.

When Soun saw Craig and Fry officially installed in the house, he felt some regret. There would be no more answers or taels; besides, his master began to abuse him again. Unfortunate Soun! what would he have said had he known what the future had in store for him?

The first care Kin-Fo took was to phonograph to Cha-Coua Avenue, Pekin, the change of fortune which made him richer than before. The young lady heard the voice again of him whom she believed to be lost to her forever. He would see his little younger sister again. The seventh moon would not pass before he would see her, never to leave her again; having refused to make her miserable, he did not wish to run the risk of making her a widow. Le-ou did not quite understand what this last phrase meant. She only knew one thing; that was, that her lover had returned, and that before two months he would be with her. On that day there was not a happier woman than the young widow in all the Celestial Empire.

A complete reaction had taken place in Kin-Fo's ideas—now become a fourfold millionaire—from the operations of the Central Bank in California. He intended to live, and to live well. Twenty days of emotions had changed him. Neither the Mandarin Pao-Shen, nor the Merchant Yin-Pang, nor Tim the high liver, nor Houal the literary man would have recognized in him the indifferent host who bade them good-by on one of the flower-boats on the River of Pearls. Wang would not have believed his eyes were he there, but he had disappeared. He did not come back to the house at Shang-Hai.

Eight days later, on the 24th of May, no news was heard of the philosopher; vainly did Kin-Fo, Craig, and Fry search the districts, the shops, and the suburbs of Shang-Hai, and the most skillful detectives of the police searched in vain for him about the country. The philosopher could not be found.

Craig and Fry became more uneasy, and increased their precautions. Neither by day nor by night did they lose sight of their client; they eat at the same table with him, and slept in the same room. They tried to persuade him to wear a steel breast-plate in case he was struck with a dagger, and to eat only eggs in the shell to prevent him being poisoned. Kin-Fo sent them away. Why not shut him up for two months in the Centenary safe under the pretext that he was worth $200,000?

Then William J. Bidulph, always practical, proposed to his client to return him the premium and destroy the policy.

"I am sorry," said Kin-Fo, "but the thing is done, and you must take the consequences."

"Well, let it be so," said the agent, who had to submit to what he could not avoid. "You are right. You will never be better guarded than by us."

"Nor for better value," replied Kin-Fo.

CHAPTER X

KIN-FO BECOMES CELEBRATED

Still Wang could not be found.

This complication disturbed the calm of the agent of the Centenary. At first he had thought that Wang would not fulfill his promise, but now he began to believe that nothing was impossible in that strange country which they call the Celestial Empire. He was soon of the same opinion as Kin-Fo, that if they could not find Wang, the philosopher would keep his word. His disappearance even indicated a project of attacking his pupil when he least expected it, like a thunderbolt, and striking him to the heart. After placing the letter on the body of his victim, he would quietly present himself at the office of the Centenary to claim his insurance.

Wang must, therefore, be notified. The Honorable William J. Bidulph had to use some indirect means. In a few days notices were forwarded to the different Chinese newspapers, and telegrams were sent to the foreign journals in both worlds: "Mr. Wang, of Shang-Hai, is requested to consider the agreement made between Mr. Kin-Fo and himself, under date the 2d of May last, as canceled; the said Mr.

Kin-Fo having but one desire, and that is to die a centenarian."

This strange advertisement was soon followed by another more practical: "Two thousand dollars to whoever will make known to William J. Bidulph, the principal agent of the Centenary at Shang-Hai, the present residence of Mr. Wang, of said city."

That the philosopher was running around the world during the fifty-five days given him to fulfill his promise, there was no reason to suppose. It was more probable that he was concealed in the suburbs of Shang-Hai; but the Honorable William J. Bidulph did not believe he could use too many precautions.

Several days passed, and there was no change in the situation of affairs. The advertisements were reproduced in profusion, under the familiar American style: "Wang, Wang, Wang," on one side, and "Kin-Fo, Kin-Fo, Kin-Fo," on the other. This had the effect of creating general laughter.

As far as the remotest provinces of the Celestial Empire people cried out in jest, "Where is Wang?" "Who has seen Wang?" "Where does Wang live?" "What is Wang doing?"

"Wang! Wang! Wang!" cried the little Chinese children in the streets.

The advertisements were soon in the mouths of everybody, and Kin-Fo, who wished to become a centenarian, who sought for longevity, like the celebrated elephant whose twentieth lustrum was about being accomplished in the palace of the stables of Pekin, could not fail to be soon very much in the fashion.

Kin-Fo had to endure the inconveniences of this singular celebrity, and they went so far as to sing songs about him to the tune of "The Five Periods of the Centenarian." If Kin-Fo was annoyed at the noise made over his name, William J. Bidulph, on the contrary, was rejoiced; but Wang was, none the less, not to be found.

Things went so far that Kin-Fo was unable to endure the situation. Did he go out—a train of children of every age and sex followed him in the streets, and along the wharves, and even as far as the suburbs. Did he go home—a rabble of the worst kind stood before the doors of the yamen.

Every morning he had to satisfy his people that he had not slept in his coffin in the "Pavilion of Long Life." The papers published an ironical bulletin of his health with comments, as if he belonged to the reigning dynasty of the "Tsing," which made him appear ridiculous.

It followed that one day, on the 21st of May, the annoyed Kin-Fo went to find the Honorable William J. Bidulph, to notify him that he intended to leave the place. He had had enough of Shang-Hai, and the people of Shang-Hai. The agent thereupon remarked to him, very justly, "You may be running greater risks."

"I care little for that," said Kin-Fo.

"But where are you going?"

"Straight before me."

"But where will you stop?"

"Nowhere."

"When will you come back?"

"Never."

"And if I should get some news of Wang?"

"Let Wang go to the devil! Oh, the foolish idea I had of giving him that absurd letter!"

Kin-Fo still had a great desire to find the philosopher. That his life was in the hands of another annoyed him, but to have to wait another month in such a situation he was not resigned to. The lamb was becoming enraged.

"Well, go then," said William J. Bidulph. "Craig and Fry will follow you, wherever you go."

"As you like," said Kin-Fo; "but I give you notice that they will have to run about."

Kin-Fo returned home and prepared to depart. Soun was to accompany him, although he did not like moving about.

Fry and Craig, like true Americans, were always ready to go, even to the end of the world, and they asked but one question: "Where, sir—" said Craig.

"Are you going?" added Fry.

"To Nan-King first, and then to the devil."

The same smile appeared simultaneously on Craig and Fry's lips; they were delighted. "To the devil!" nothing could please them better. They took leave of the Honorable William J. Bidulph, and dressed themselves in Chinese costume, in order to attract less attention during the journey through the Celestial Empire. An hour afterward, with

their bags at their side, and their revolvers fastened around their waist, they returned to the yamen.

At nihgtfall Kin-Fo and his companions took passage on the steamboat which runs between Shang-Hai and Nan-King. In less than twelve hours they ascended by the Blue River as far as the old capital of Southern China. During the short passage, Craig and Fry took precious care of Kin-Fo, staring at all the passengers to see if they could recognize anybody, and particularly if they could see the philosopher, whom they knew very well. They felt assured that he was not on board. After taking this precaution, they paid particular attention to Kin-Fo; they felt every support on which he might lean; they drew him away from the boiler; they cautioned him not to expose himself to the night air; they scolded Soun for his neglect, as he was never near his master when he wanted him. They also slept at his cabin door, ready to assist him if, by an explosion or collision, the steamboat should sink.

But no accident occurred to prove Fry and Craig's devotion. The steamboat rapidly descended the Wousung, touched at Yang-Tse-Kiang, coasted along the island of Tsong-Ming, ascended through the province of Kiang-Sou, and on the 22d, in the morning, landed her passengers safe and sound on the quay of the old imperial city. Soun was indebted to the two body-guards that his pigtail had not grown shorter during the voyage.

It was not without a motive that Kin-Fo stopped first at Nan-King. He had an idea that he might find the philosopher there. Wang might be attracted by past recollections to this unfortunate city, which was the principal center of the rebellion of the Tachings. It was possible that the philosopher, feeling homesick, had taken refuge in those places so full of personal recollections, and from there, in a few hours, he could return to Shang-Hai, ready to deal the blow.

Such was Kin-Fo's reason for stopping at Nan-King; should he meet Wang, all would be explained, and the absurd situation would be finished. If Wang was not there, he could continue his travels through the Celestial Empire until the time expired when he would have nothing to fear from his old teacher and friend.

"I am traveling under the assumed name of Ki-Nan,"

said Kin-Fo to his companions, "and I do not wish my real name to be known, under any pretext whatever."

"Ki—" said Craig.

"Nan," finished Fry.

"Ki-Nan," repeated Soun.

One can understand that Kin-Fo escaping the annoyances of his fame at Shang-Hai, did not wish to meet them again on his journey.

The whole day was passed in visiting the different places and streets in Nan-King. Kin-Fo walked quickly, talked little, and looked at everything. No suspicious person appeared among the mass of people which they met on the canals or in the streets. They saw no one they knew around the yamen of the Catholic missionaries, nor in the neighborhood of the arsenal. Kin-Fo, followed by his two companions, left by the eastern gate, and ventured out into the deserted country. They saw a small temple, and behind it was a hill. Under its turf Rong-Ou, the bonze who had become an emperor, and five centuries before had fought against the foreign power.

Might not the philosopher have come here again to look at the tomb where rested the founder of the dynasty of Ming? But the temple was abandoned. The only guardians were the colossal figures on the marble.

On the door of the temple Kin-Fo saw, not without emotion, signs which some hand had engraved there. He approached, and read these three letters

W., K. F.

Wang! Kin-Fo! There could be no doubt that the philosopher had recently passed there.

CHAPTER XI

TRAVEL UNDER DIFFICULTIES

WHO is this traveler who is seen running over the principal road and up the canals and rivers of the Celestial Empire? He is going on and on all the time, not knowing in the evening where he will be to-morrow. He crosses over cities without seeing them, he goes to hotels only to sleep a few hours, and he stops at restaurants only to take a hasty

meal. He is prodigal with his money; he throws it about to hasten his progress.

It is not a merchant engaged in business; it is not a mandarin to whom the minister has given an important and pressing mission; it is not an artist in search of the beauties of nature; it is not a savant who is in search of ancient documents stored in the temples of old China; it is not a student going to the pagoda to get his university degrees; nor is it a priest of Buddha inspecting the altars; nor a pilgrim fulfilling a vow at one of the five holy mountains of the Celestial Empire. It is the pretended Ki-Nan, accompanied by Fry and Craig, followed by Soun. It is Kin-Fo, in that singular state of mind which leads him to search for the undiscoverable Wang.

The travelers had taken at Nan-King one of those rapid American steamboats, those floating hotels which sail on the Blue River. Sixty hours later, and they land at Ran-Keou. There, situated at the confluence of the Blue River and its important tributary, the Ran-Kiang, the wandering Kin-Fo stopped half a day.

If Craig and Fry had ever hoped that on this journey through China they could get any idea of its customs, or learn anything of its cities, they were soon undeceived. They had not even time to take notes, and their impressions were reduced to the names of cities and suburbs, and to the days of the month; but they were neither curious nor talkative, they hardly ever spoke; for what good would it do? what Craig thought, Fry thought also.

Kin-Fo was not the man to give up this style of traveling, which pleased him. He expected to go to the point where the Ran-Kiang would cease to be navigable, after that he would consider. Craig and Fry would have liked that kind of navigation the whole course of the journey, for it was easier to watch on board of a boat, and there was less danger.

As for Soun, this life on board of a steamboat was agreeable to him. He did not have to walk; he had nothing to do; and he left his master to the good offices of Craig and Fry. He slept in the corner after breakfast, dinner, and supper, and the cooking was good.

Whoever had followed Kin-Fo from province to province, from city to city, in this fantastic journey, would have had

much to do. At one time he would travel in a carriage, but such a carriage—it was nothing more than a box, fastened by large iron nails to the axletree of two wheels, drawn by two mules, and a linen covering which allowed the rays of the sun and the rain to penetrate. At another time he might be seen extended in a mule-chair, like a sentry-box hung between two poles, and which pitched and tossed about like a ship at sea. Craig and Fry followed on two asses which rolled and pitched more than the chair, trotted along like two aids-de-camp.

As to Soun, on such occasions, when walking was necessarily rapid, he went on foot grumbling and complaining, and comforting himself, when the opportunity offered, with brandy. He also felt a peculiar rolling motion, but it was due to other causes than the roughness of the road over which he had to go.

It was on horseback, and poor horses they were, that Kin-Fo and his companions made their entry into Si-Gnan-Fou, the ancient capital of the Central Empire, the former residence of the emperors of the dynasty of Tang. But to reach this far-off province of Chen-Si, and to cross the plains, how much fatigue and danger they had to undergo.

As to the dangers, they were but too real in a country where the police have an extraordinary dread of being stabbed by robbers. Several times suspicious looking men stopped the travelers while they were crossing narrow places, but on seeing Craig and Fry with their revolvers in their belts, they were frightened away. Nevertheless, the agents of the Centenary sometimes experienced great fear for the living million of dollars they were escorting, if not for themselves. That Kin-Fo should fall by Wang's poniard, or by a robber's dagger, would make no difference; the result would be the same, and the Company's money-chest would receive the blow.

Under those circumstances, Kin-Fo, who was armed, could defend himself. His life he valued more than ever now, and, as Craig and Fry remarked, "he would kill himself to preserve it."

At Tong-Kouan Kin-Fo intended to rest some days. He was looking for a convenient hotel where he could find a good bed, and a good table, which would have been agreeable to Fry and Craig, and more so to Soun. But the

latter had the imprudence to give the Custom-house authorities the real name of his master, which cost him a partial loss of his pigtail. This mistake made Kin-Fo leave the city at once in great anger. The name had produced its effect. People wished to see the celebrated Kin-Fo, this unique man, whose only desire was to become a centenarian.

The disgusted traveler, with his two guards and his valet, had only time to escape from the crowds of curious people who followed his footsteps. He ascended the shores of the Yellow River on foot, and he and his companions traveled until they were exhausted, when they stopped at a little town, where, his being unknown, secured him some hours of peace and quiet.

Soun was so absolutely discomfited, that he dared not say a word, and, with the ridiculous little rat-tail that yet remained to him, he was a comic sight. The boys ran after him, making fun of him and calling him names, and he, too, was in a hurry to arrive at some place where his master was unknown.

The little town had no horses, wagons, or chairs. There was no alternative but to remain there or go on. This did not inspire the philosopher Wang's pupil with good humor, and he showed very little philosophy under the circumstances. He accused everybody, and had only himself to blame. How he regretted the time when he had nothing to do but live. "If to know happiness it is necessary to experience pain and torments," as Wang said, "I know it now."

While thus going about, he met worthy fellows without a penny in their pockets, who nevertheless were happy. He could not but see the varied forms of happiness which work, cheerfully performed, gives. Here were laborers bent over their plows, and there workmen who sang while handling their tools. Was it not to the want of this labor that Kin-Fo's lack of happiness might be attributed? Ah! the lesson was complete; he believed so, at least.

Craig and Fry finished by discovering a vehicle, the only one, after searching through the village, but they were unable to use it. It was a wheelbarrow—Pascal's wheelbarrow, and no doubt invented before the time of the invention of powder, the art of writing, the compass, and the kite.

In China, the wheel of this conveyance, which is large in

diameter, is placed, not at the extreme end of the shafts, but in the center, and moves across the body of the wheelbarrow like the central wheel of some steamboats. The body is divided into two parts, in one of which the traveler can stretch himself out, and in the other his baggage is carried.

The motor of this vehicle can be only one man, who pushes it before him, and does not drag it after him. He is therefore placed behind the traveler, and does not obstruct his view, as the English cab-driver does. When the wind is favorable, the man adds to the natural force by setting a mast in front of the vehicle and raising a sail; so that when the breeze is strong, instead of pushing the wheelbarrow, it is the wheelbarrow which draws the man along —and sometimes faster than he wishes to go.

This vehicle was brought, with all its accessories, and Kin-Fo entered it. The wind was favorable, and the sail was hoisted. "Let us go, Soun," said Kin-Fo.

Soun was preparing to stretch himself out in the baggage compartment of the wheelbarrow. "Into the shafts!" cried Kin-Fo, in a tone which admitted of no reply.

"But, master—" said Soun, whose legs shook like a foundered horse.

"To the shafts!" repeated Kin-Fo, looking suspiciously at Soun's pigtail. "To the shafts! and look out that you do not shake me."

Soun passed the straps around his shoulders, and took hold of the shafts with both hands. Fry and Craig took their position, one on each side of the wheelbarrow, and the breeze assisting them, the little band went off at a brisk trot. We cannot attempt to describe Soun's powerless rage.

It was in this equipage that Kin-Fo entered into the northern provinces of China; walking when he wanted to stretch his legs, and driven in a wheelbarrow when he wished to rest himself.

On the 19th of June he reached Tong-Tcheou. Wang had yet six days to complete his contract.

CHAPTER XII

LAMENT OF THE FIVE PERIODS

"GENTLEMEN," said Kin-Fo to his two body-guards, when the wheelbarrow stopped at the entrance to the suburbs of Tong-Tcheou, "we have only forty miles to reach Pekin, and I intend to stay here until the time of the agreement will have expired between Wang and myself. In this city of four hundred thousand souls I can easily remain without being known, if Soun will only remember that he is in the service of Ki-Nan, a merchant of the province of Chen-Si."

Certainly, Soun would remember it; his blunder had cost him too much—was he not filling the place of a horse for eight days; "and he hoped that Kin-Fo——"

"Ki—" said Craig.

"Nan!" added Fry.

"Would not take him from his ordinary duties; and now, in the present tired state which he was in, he had but one favor to ask of Kin-Fo——"

"Ki—" again said Craig.

"Nan!" repeated Fry.

"That was, to be allowed to sleep for forty-eight hours, without any bridle or harness at all."

"For eight days, if you like," answered Kin-Fo, "for you cannot talk while you are asleep."

Kin-Fo and his companions occupied themselves in looking for a suitable hotel in Tong-Tcheou. That large city is only an immense suburb of Pekin. The road which joins it to the capital is bordered with villas, houses, tombs, and small pagodas. Kin-Fo was conducted to Tae-Ouang-Miao, the temple of the sovereign princes. It is a temple, transformed into a hotel where strangers can be comfortably lodged.

An hour afterward Kin-Fo and his two body-guards left their rooms, after taking breakfast with a good appetite, and they asked themselves what was to be done now? "It is necessary," echoed Craig and Fry, "to read the *Official Gazette,* so that we may see if there is anything there concerning ourselves."

"You are right," answered Kin-Fo. "Perhaps we may learn something about Wang, too."

All three left the hotel. The two acolytes walked on each side of Kin-Fo, looking at the passers-by, and allowing no one to approach him. They went by the side streets, in this way, until they reached the wharves, where they bought a copy of the *Official Gazette,* and read it eagerly. There was nothing in it but the promise of the two thousand dollars, or the thirteen hundred taels, to any one who would make known to William J. Bidulph the present residence of Mr. Wang, of Shang-Hai.

"So he has not turned up?" said Kin-Fo.

"He has not, therefore, read the advertisement about himself," remarked Craig.

"He therefore intends to fulfill the contract," added Fry.

"Without any doubt," answered Kin-Fo. "If Wang does not know the change in the situation of my affairs, and that seems probable, he will feel the necessity of keeping his promise. Therefore, in one, two, or three days, I will be in greater danger than I am to-day; and in six days I will be in greater danger than ever."

"But the time will pass."

"Then I shall have no more to fear."

"Well, sir," answered Craig and Fry, "there are but three ways of getting rid of this danger for the next six days."

"What is the first?" asked Kin-Fo.

"It is to shut yourself up in the room of your hotel," said Craig, "and to wait until the time has expired."

"And what is the second?"

"It is to have yourself arrested as a criminal," answered Fry, "and placed in the prison of Tong-Tcheou."

"And what is the third?"

"It is to pass yourself off for a dead man," answered Fry and Craig, "and not to rise again until you are sure there is no danger."

"You don't know Wang," cried Kin-Fo. "Wang would find means to get into this hotel, into my prison, and even into my tomb. If he has not already dealt the blow, it is because he has not wished to do so, and he prefers to let me have the pleasure of enjoying the anxiety of waiting. Who knows what his motive is? Anyway, I prefer to have my liberty.'

"Wait then!" said Craig.

"It appears to me——" added Fry.

"Gentlemen!" answered Kin-Fo, in a dry tone, "I will do as I please. After all, if I die before the 25th of this month, what is your company going to lose?"

"Two hundred thousand dollars," answered Fry and Craig. "Two hundred thousand dollars which they will have to pay to your heirs."

"And I lose all my fortune, without saying anything about my life. I am therefore more interested than you are in this matter."

"Certainly."

"Very true."

"Well, you may continue to watch over me as much as you please, but I will do as I am inclined."

There was nothing to reply to this. Craig and Fry were obliged to increase their precautions, and allow their client to act as he pleased.

Tong-Tcheou is one of the oldest cities in the Celestial Empire; it is the center of business activity; its suburbs are very lively from the ingress and egress of its inhabitants. Kin-Fo and his two companions were struck with this active movement when they arrived on the wharf, where the junks and other boats are anchored.

Craig and Fry, on thinking over the situation of affairs, arrived at the conclusion that there was more safety in the midst of a crowd. The death of their client could be only brought about by suicide; the letter which would be found upon his person would leave no doubt in that respect.

Wang would have no interest in striking him down, except on certain conditions, which did not offer themselves in the crowded streets or in the public places in a city. Consequently, Kin-Fo's guardians had no fear of an immediate attack. There only remained now, to find out whether the Tai-ping, by some means, had not been following them since their departure from Shang-Hai, and they used their eyes in staring at the people as they passed them by.

All of a sudden a name was heard spoken at which they pricked up their ears.

"Kin-Fo, Kin-Fo!" cried some little Chinese children, clapping their hands and, jumping about in the midst of a crowd.

Was Kin-Fo known there, and had his name produced the accustomed effect? Our hero stopped. Craig and Fry held themselves in readiness, in case of an attack.

It was not for Kin-Fo that these cries were intended. No one appeared to know him. He did not stir, but curious to know why his name was called, he waited. A crowd of men, women, and children were gathered around a strolling singer, who appeared to be very popular with the people in the streets. The crowd clapped their hands and applauded him in advance.

When the singer had a sufficiently large audience he drew out a package of illustrated cards, beautifully colored, and then he cried, in a loud voice:

"THE FIVE PERIODS OF THE CENTENARIAN."

It was the famous lament which was going the rounds of the Celestial Empire.

Craig and Fry wished to draw away their client, but this time Kin-Fo insisted on remaining. No one knew him. He had never heard the lament which related his ways and doings; he wanted to hear it. The singer commenced thus:

"In the first period, when the moon shines on the roof of the house at Shang-Hai, Kin-Fo is young; he is only twenty years old; he looks like the willow whose first leaves show their little green tongue.

"In the second period, when the moon shines on the east side of the rich yamen, Kin-Fo is forty years old, and his business has succeeded to his liking, and his neighbors sing his praises."

The singer changed the expression of his face, and seemed to age at every verse. He was loaded with applause. He continued:

"In the third period the moon lights the open space. Kin-Fo is sixty years old. After the green leaves of summer, the yellow chrysanthemums of autumn come.

"In the fourth period the moon has declined to the west. Kin-Fo is eighty years old. His body is twisted like a prawn in hot water. He is failing; he is sinking with the star of night.

"In the fifth period the cocks salute the birth of dawn. Kin-Fo is a hundred years old. He dies; his greatest de-

sire is accomplished, but Prince Ien refuses to receive him. The prince does not want aged people who go into second childhood in his court. Old Kin-Fo must wander through all eternity, without being able to rest."

The crowd applauded, and the singer sold hundreds of his laments at three sapeques a copy.

And why should not Kin-Fo buy one? He drew some money from his pocket, and extending his arm, the money fell on the ground in the midst of the crowd. There was a man standing opposite who fixed his gaze on him.

"Ah!" said Kin-Fo. At the same time Fry and Craig came up to him, thinking that he was recognized, threatened, or perhaps struck.

"Wang!" cried Kin-Fo.

"Wang!" repeated Craig and Fry.

It was indeed Wang. He saw his old pupil; but instead of embracing him, repulsed him vigorously, and ran away as fast as he could.

Kin-Fo did not hesitate, but pursued Wang, escorted by Fry and Craig. They also recognized the philosopher, who evidently no more expected to see Kin-Fo than Kin-Fo expected to find him there. Why did Wang fly away? It was a mystery, but he did run as if all the police in the Celestial Empire were running after him. It was a mad pursuit.

"I am not ruined, Wang! Wang, I am not ruined!" cried Kin-Fo.

"Rich!" cried Fry.

"Rich!" repeated Craig.

But Wang was too far ahead to hear these words, which were meant to stop him. He ran along the wharf and the canal, and reached the suburbs. The three pursuers ran after him, but did not gain. Half a dozen Chinamen joined in the race, as well as two or three tipaos, who mistook him for a criminal. It was a curious sight, this crowd shouting and screaming, adding to their number as they went along.

The name Wang was sufficient. Wang was that enigmatical personage whose discovery would be worth a large reward. Everybody knew it; and while Kin-Fo ran after his eight hundred thousand dollars, Craig and Fry ran after

their two hundred thousand, and the others ran after the two thousand, which was the amount of the reward offered for the discovery of Wang.

"Wang! Wang! I am richer than ever!" repeatedly cried Kin-Fo, as much as his speed would allow him.

"Not ruined?" cried Fry.

"Not ruined," repeated Craig.

"Stop, stop!" cried the pursuers, who made the dust fly.

Wang heard nothing. He was unwilling to allow the crowd to gain on him by turning his head.

The suburbs were passed, and Wang made for the road along the canal, where he had a free field. His speed increased, but his pursuers increased their efforts, and this mad chase was kept up for twenty minutes. No one knew what the result would be; but it was evident that the fugitive was weakening. The distance between his pursuers and himself was being shortened.

Wang, seeing this, ran behind some trees in front of a small pagoda on the right of the road.

"Ten thousand taels to whoever stops him!" cried Kin-Fo.

"Ten thousand—" cried Craig.

"Taels," concluded Fry.

"Yes, yes," cried the crowd; and they crossed the road, and were winding around the pagoda. Wang appeared again, and taking a direct course along a canal to avoid his pursuers, found himself on a paved road. He was now exhausted, and often turned his head around.

The end was approaching, it was only a question of a short time—perhaps a few minutes at most.

Wang, Kin-Fo, and his companions had arrived at a place where the road crossed a river, over the celebrated bridge of Palikao. It was now no use attempting to stop Wang by words which he could not or would not hear. It was necessary to catch him, and, if necessary, to tie him. An explanation would follow.

Wang saw that he would be taken, and he seemed to wish to avoid meeting his old pupil face to face, and he would have risked his life rather than to see him. With one bound Wang jumped upon the railing of the bridge and threw himself into the Pei-ho.

Kin-Fo stopped and cried out, "Wang, Wang!"

Then, taking a leap, he also sprang into the river, shouting, "I will take him alive!"

"Craig," said Fry.

"Fry," said Craig.

"Two hundred thousand dollars in the water." They both jumped on the railing and plunged into the water to aid the ruinous client of the Centenary. Some few of the pursuers followed in their excitement.

Kin-Fo, Fry, and Craig searched for Wang, but he could not be found. He must have been drawn down by the river, and drowned. Had he deliberately sought death or only been striving to escape? No one could tell.

CHAPTER XIII

PEKIN

The Pe-Tche-Li, the most western of the eighteen provinces of China, is divided into nine departments. The capital of one of these is Chun-Kin-Fo; that is, "the City of the First Order, Submissive to Heaven," which city is Pekin. It comprises two distinct cities, which are divided by a large boulevard and a fortified wall. One of them, the Chinese City, is a rectangular parallelogram; and the other, the Tartar City, is almost a perfect square; the latter incloses two other cities named the "Yellow City" (Hoang-Tching), and the "Red City" (Tsen-Kin-Tching).

The Chinese city is divided, north and south, by an important artery called Grand Avenue. Transversely it is crossed by another artery, much longer, which cuts the first at a right angle, and runs from the Cha-Coua Gate at the east to the Couan-Tsu Gate at the west. It is called Cha-Coua Avenue, and it was about a hundred paces from its point of intersection with Grand Avenue that the future Madame Kin-Fo lived.

The reader may remember that, a few days after she received the letter announcing Kin-Fo's ruin, she received a second contradicting the first, and saying that the seventh moon would not pass over before her little younger brother would be near her.

It is useless to ask whether Le-ou counted the days and hours after that date, the 17th of May; but Kin-Fo gave her

no further news of himself during that wild journey, the object of which he would not make known to anybody under any pretext. Le-ou had written to Shang-Hai. Her letters remained unanswered. We can well conceive her anxiety when on the 19th of June no letter had been received by her.

Le-ou was a Buddhist. The bonzes often observed her coming to the temple of Koan-Ti-Miao, consecrated to the Goddess Koanine. There she made prayers for her friend, and burned perfumed sticks, and prostrated herself in the porch of the temple.

That day she thought she would implore the Goddess Koanine, for she had a presentiment that some great danger threatened him whom she expected with impatience. Le-ou therefore called the "old mother," and told her to go and order a chair and carriers in the square in Grand Avenue. Nan shrugged her shoulders, and went to execute her message.

During this time the young widow was alone in her dressing-room, looking sadly at the phonograph, which no longer enabled her to hear the voice of her absent one. "Ah!" said she, "he must at least know that I do not cease to think of him, and I wish that my voice may repeat this to him when he returns." Le-ou pushed the spring which puts the phonographic wheel in motion, and with a loud voice spoke the sweet phrases her heart inspired.

Nan entered suddenly, and interrupted this tender monologue. The chair-bearers were waiting for madame, "who might as well have stayed at home."

Le-ou did not hear, but went out, leaving the old woman to scold as she liked. She installed herself in the chair, after giving orders to carry her to Koan-Ti-Miao.

The carriers had only to turn around Cha-Coua Avenue and ascend Grand Avenue as far as the Gate of Tien. But they did not advance without difficulties. Business was brisk at this hour, and there was considerable delay in that quarter of the city, which is one of the most populous in the capital. Here might be seen peddler's booths, open-air orators, fortune-tellers, photographers; and there a wedding procession, or perhaps a funeral—all helping to block up the way. In another place there might be seen a crowd before the yamen of a magistrate. On the Leou-Ping rock there was a criminal kneeling, who had received a beating.

There was also a thief shut up in a wooden box, with his head looking backward, who was left to public charity. Others were seen wearing yokes like oxen.

Le-ou's chair went very slow, and the impediments became greater as she approached the outer boulevard. She arrived there, however, and stopped at the interior of the bastion, which defends the door near the Temple of the Goddess Koanine.

Le-ou descended from her chair, entered the temple, and, after kneeling, she prostrated herself before the statue of the goddess. She then directed her steps to a religious machine, which is called the "prayer mill." It is a sort of reel, with eight branches, on the ends of which were little streamers ornamented with sacred texts. A bonze stood gravely near the machine and awaited the worshiper, and especially the price for the devotions. Le-ou gave the servant of Buddha a few taels, which were to pay the expenses of religion, and then with her right hand she seized the handle of the reel and commenced to turn it slowly, after placing her left hand on her heart.

"Faster," said the bonze, with an encouraging gesture, and the young woman began to turn faster. This lasted for a quarter of an hour, after which the bonze assured her that her prayers would be granted. Le-ou again bowed down before the Goddess Koanine, left the temple, entered the chair, and was taken home.

As she reached Grand Avenue the carriers went faster; the stores were being closed, and business was being suspended; a long *cortège* filled a part of the avenue, and was noisily approaching.

It was the Emperor Koang-Sin, whose name means "Continuation of Glory," who was returning to his good Tartar City, whose middle gate was about to open to him. At the head were two body-guards, followed by a platoon of soldiers; next came a group of officers of high rank, who held a yellow parasol with ruffles, and ornamented with a dragon, which is the emblem of the emperor, as the phœnix is that of the empress.

The palanquin next appeared, and was carried by sixteen men with red dresses covered with white rosettes, and closely fitting embroidered silk waistcoats. Princes, dignitaries on horses harnessed in yellow silk, as a sign of very high rank,

escorted the imperial carriage. In the palanquin reclined the Son of Heaven, cousin of the Emperor Tong-Tche, and nephew of Prince Kong.

After the palanquin came relays of carriers and grooms. This *cortège* entered the gates of Tien, to the satisfaction of promenaders, merchants and others, who could now attend to their business.

Le-ou's chair continued on its way to her house, where she arrived after being absent about two hours. But what a surprise the Goddess Koanine had in store for the young woman!

When the chair stopped, a carriage drawn by two mules, and covered with dust, drove up to the door, and Kin-Fo, followed by Craig, Fry, and Soun, descended from it.

"Is it you? is it you?" cried Le-ou, who could not believe what she saw.

"Dear little younger sister!" answered Kin-Fo, "you certainly did not doubt that I would return?"

Le-ou could not answer. She took her friend's hand, and drawing him into her dressing-room before the little phonograph, the discreet confidant of her troubles, she said, "I have not for a moment doubted your return;" and adjusting the wheel of the phonograph, she pressed the spring which set it in motion.

Kin-Fo then heard a sweet voice repeat what the loving Le-ou had been saying to him a few hours before his arrival.

"Come back, well-beloved little brother—come back to me! that our hearts may be no longer separated, as are the two stars of Orpheus and Lyra. I think only of your return."

The phonograph was silent for a few moments, when it cried out, in a harsh voice: "Is it not sufficient to have a mistress, without having a master in the house? May Prince Ien strangle them both!"

This second voice was easy to recognize—it was Nan's. The disagreeable old woman continued to speak after Le-ou left the room, while the machine was in a condition to receive impressions; but she did not know that her imprudent words were registered. Maid-servants and valets, beware of phonographs!

That very day Nan was dismissed, without even waiting for the last days of the seventh moon.

CHAPTER XIV.

SURPRISES

Every obstacle to Kin-Fo's marriage with Le-ou was now removed. It was true that the time allowed for Wang to fulfill his pledge had not yet expired; but the unfortunate philosopher had fallen a victim as the result of his mysterious flight, and further danger was not to be feared from him. The 25th of June, the very day on which at one time Kin-Fo had wished to end his existence, was fixed for the wedding.

Le-ou had of course been informed of the various vicissitudes which her lover had experienced since he had sent her his refusal either to make her the participator of his poverty or to run the risk of leaving her a widow, and she was well aware of the altered circumstances that had led him once more to come and claim her as his bride. She could not restrain her tears when she heard of Wang's death. She had known the philosopher and esteemed him, and he had moreover been her first confidant of her sentiments toward Kin-Fo. "Poor Wang," she said, "we shall miss him at our wedding."

"Yes, poor Wang," repeated Kin-Fo; "but you must remember," he added, "that he had sworn to kill me."

Le-ou shook her pretty little head. "No, no," she said, "he would never have done that. I believe he drowned himself in the Pei-Ho, for the very purpose of evading his promise."

Kin-Fo could not but own that her hypothesis was probable. He, too, regretted the faithful companion of his youth; his memory would be long in fading from either of their hearts.

It is almost needless to say that after the catastrophe on the bridge of Palikao, Bidulph's sensational paragraphs in the newspapers were discontinued, and the name of Kin-Fo sank into oblivion almost as speedily as it had risen into notoriety. The services of Craig and Fry were no longer in such urgent requisition. It is true that they were bound to defend the interests of the Centenarian until the 30th, the date of the expiration of the policy, but there was now no demand for the same measure of unremitted vigilance.

Fear of attack from Wang had passed away, and there was no probability that Kin-Fo would lay violent hands on himself; his desire now was to live as long as possible.

But Kin-Fo did not care to give them an abrupt dismissal. If their services had not been disinterested, they had at least been conscientious, and he therefore begged them to stay over his marriage festivities, an invitation which they were very pleased to accept.

"Marriage is a kind of suicide," was Fry's jesting remark to Craig.

"It is a surrender of one's life, at all events," was Craig's reply.

Old Nan was soon replaced in Le-ou's household by a domestic of more agreeable disposition. Loo-ta-loo, an aunt of Le-ou's, of mature age, had come to stay with her, and act a mother's part at the time of her marriage. She was the wife of a second-class mandarin of the fourth rank, with the blue button, formerly an Imperial reader, and member of the Academy of the Hanlin, apparently possessing every quality for performing her office in a manner worthy of the occasion.

It was Kin-Fo's intention to leave Pekin immediately after his marriage, as besides his objection to residing in the vicinity of the Imperial Court, he felt anxious to see his young wife properly installed as mistress of the sumptuous yamen at Shang-Hai. Meantime he took temporary apartments in the Tien-Foo-Tang, or temple of celestial happiness, a very comfortable hotel and restaurant near the Tien-Men rampart, between the Chinese and Tartar towns. Craig and Fry were lodged in the same quarters. Soun had returned to his duties, but although he was always grumbling, he took care first of all to assure himself that there was no phonograph at hand. The fate of old mother Nan was a warning to him to be cautious.

Kin-Fo had the pleasure of meeting two of his Canton friends in Pekin—the merchant Yin-Pang, and Hooal, the literate. They of course were invited to attend the approaching ceremony, as well as several of the dignitaries and merchants with whom Kin-Fo was acquainted in the capital.

Wang's apathetic, indifferent pupil seemed at last to have become truly happy; two months' trouble and botheration

seemed at last to have made him appreciate his fortunate lot; the philosopher had been right, and it was a matter for regret that he was not present to witness the truth of the theory that he had advanced.

All the time that was at his disposal was spent by Kin-Fo with the young widow. She was never so happy as when he was by her side. She cared little for the presents which he lavished upon her from the richest stores in the city. Her thoughts were of him and him alone, and over and over again she would repeat to herself the wise maxims of the famous Pan-Hoei-Pan:

"If a woman has a husband after her own heart, she has him for all her life."

"A woman should have an unbounded respect for the man whose name she bears."

"A woman should be like a shadow and an echo in the house."

"The husband is the wife's heaven."

Meantime the preparations for the wedding, which Kin-Fo wished to be very handsome, were advancing rapidly. Already the thirty pairs of embroidered slippers that are necessary for a Chinese lady's trousseau had arrived at Le-ou's house, and her boudoir was crammed with confectionery and dried fruits, all in confusion with rich silks, jewels of wrought gold and precious stones, cases for the nails, bodkins for the hair, and all the charming knickknacks that Pekin jewelers so cunningly devise.

In this strange country, a young girl when she marries never has a dowry. She is literally purchased either by the husband himself, or by his relations. Although she may have no brothers, she cannot inherit any portion of her paternal fortune, unless her father makes an express declaration in her favor. Such arrangements are always completed before the marriage, and are usually negotiated by agents called "Mei-jin."

The young *fiancée* is next presented to her husband's parents. The husband himself she never sees until the wedding-day, when she is carried in a closed chair to his house. The key of the chair is handed to the bridegroom, who opens the door, and if the lady within pleases his taste, he holds out his hand to her; if not, he slams the door, and

the engagement is all at an end, the girl's parents having the right to retain the purchase-money.

No preliminaries of this kind were necessary in Kin-Fo's case; he and his future wife were both free agents, and had no one to consult besides themselves. There were, however, other formalities which might not be neglected. For three days before the wedding the inside of Le-ou's house was kept brilliantly lighted throughout, and for three whole nights Loo-ta-loo, as the representative of the bride's family, had to abstain from sleep, to indicate the grief felt at parting from the *fiancée*. Had Kin-Fo's parents been living, his house would have been illuminated too, as a sign of mourning, for according to the Hao-Khieou-Chooen, "the marriage of a son ought to be regarded as an emblem of the death of the father."

There were moreover various astrological calculations not to be overlooked. The horoscopes were taken with due form, and foretold a perfect compatibility of temper between the affianced couple. The season of the year and the age of the moon were alike favorable, and it seemed as though no marriage could possibly take place under more propitious auspices.

The appointed day arrived, and everything was ready for the great event. In China there is no formal contract made in the presence of a bonze or lama, nor even before a civil magistrate, and it was arranged that the bride should be conducted with great pomp to the hotel of Celestial Happiness at eight o'clock in the evening.

At seven o'clock Kin-Fo, attended by Craig and Fry, waited to receive his friends at the door of his apartment. The invitations dispensed to them had been inscribed in microscopic characters on red paper, and ran thus:

"Kin-Fo of Shang-Hai presents his humble respects to ——, and humbly begs him to assist at the humble ceremony of his marriage."

The guests thus invited all arrived. They had come to do honor to the bridegroom, and to take part in the magnificent banquet prepared for the men, while the ladies would feast apart at a table specially reserved for them. Yin-Pang and Hooal the literate duly arrived among the rest.

As soon as they arrived, Kin-Fo conducted them to the

reception-room, stopping twice on the way at doors which were opened by servants in gorgeous livery, and begging his guests to pass before him. His mode of addressing them was in the politest strain. He called them by their "noble names," inquired after their "noble health," and asked for information about their "noble families." Not even the most scrupulous observer of etiquette could have found the slightest flaw in his manners or deportment.

Craig and Fry watched his demeanor with surprise and admiration. They watched him also for another reason. The same idea had occurred to them both: namely, that Wang might not have perished, as they imagined, in the river. Were there not yet several hours to expire? Perhaps, even now, he might mingle with the wedding-guests and strike the fatal blow. Improbable as this was, it was not impossible, and Craig and Fry carefully scrutinized every one who entered. But the face they sought did not appear.

The bride arrived. Kin-Fo stepped forward. The master of the ceremonies handed him a key, with which he unlocked the door of the palanquin. He held out his hand; Le-ou, trembling and beautiful, descended lightly, and passed through the assembled visitors, who saluted her respectfully by raising their hands to their breasts. As the bride entered the hotel a signal was given, and instantly a number of illuminated kites in the form of dragons, phœnixes, and other emblems of marriage, rose into the air; flying pigeons, with a little musical apparatus attached to their tails, filled the space overhead with harmonious sounds, while hundreds of sky-rockets shot up and descended in a golden shower.

Suddenly a distant noise was heard upon the ramparts. Mingled with the murmur of voices were heard the tones of a trumpet's blast. The noise ceased, then began again. This time the sounds were nearer; it was evident they were approaching the very street where the bridal *cortège* had arrived. Kin-Fo paused and listened; his friends stood waiting to receive the bride. Gradually the commotion reached the street; the trumpets were being blown more vigorously than ever.

"What can it be?" Kin-Fo exclaimed.

Le-ou turned pale; a presentiment of the cause of the

uproar made her heart beat fast. All at once the mob rushed down the street. In the midst was a herald wearing the Imperial uniform, and escorted by a detachment of ti-paos. Silence fell upon the multitude, as he proclaimed in sonorous tones, "The Empress dowager is dead!"

"An interdiction! an interdiction!"

Kin-Fo uttered an exclamation of rage and disappointment. Only too well he knew what an interdiction meant. It meant that during the court-mourning, which commencing from that moment would last for a period to be fixed by law, no subject would be allowed to have his head shaved, no public festivities might be held, no theatrical representations might be given, no courts of justice might be open, and worst of all—no marriages might be celebrated!"

Le-ou, though downcast, was not disconcerted. Taking Kin-Fo's hand, she pressed it gently, and in a voice that strove to conceal her emotion, she said bravely, "We must wait a little longer!"

And so the palanquin departed, bearing the fair young bride back to her home in the Cha-Cou-a Avenue. The festivities were suspended; the tables cleared; the orchestra dismissed, and the guests, after condolences with the disconsolate bridegroom, took their departure.

Kin-Fo, with only Craig and Fry, was left in the deserted apartment of the hotel of Celestial Happiness, a name of bitter sarcasm to him now. An evil fate seemed still to be pursuing him. He dared not run the risk of infringing the Imperial edict, and the interdiction might be prolonged at the Emperor's pleasure to an indefinite period. Here indeed was an occasion when he had need of all the precepts of philosophy instilled into him in his early days.

An hour later, a servant entered bearing a letter, which he said had just been delivered by a messenger. Kin-Fo exclaimed with surprise. He recognized the handwriting; it was Wang's own.

"My dear Friend,

"I am yet alive, but by the time you receive this I shall be dead. I die because I have not courage to perform my contract; but be content, I have provided for your wishes to be carried out. Lao-Shen, a Tai-ping, and a former comrade of my own, has your letter. He has hands and heart

that will not flinch. He will do the deed. To him I have bequeathed the sum of money which would fall to me at your death.

"Farewell, dear friend; my death will not long precede your own! Again farewell!

"Yours ever,
"WANG."

CHAPTER XV
OFF AGAIN

HERE was a dilemna! It left Kin-Fo in a more critical position than ever. Wang's courage, it was true, had failed him at the last, and nothing was to be apprehended from him. But had he not deputed his commission to an avowed Tai-ping who would murder him without the least scruple? And was not that Tai-ping in possession of a document that would protect him from punishment? Moreover, had he not 50,000 dollars to gain by the transaction?

Kin-Fo stamped his foot in vexation, and muttered, "Enough of this business! it must be settled somehow!"

Handing Wang's letter to Craig and Fry, he asked them whether they had anything to suggest.

They inquired whether the paper he had given to Wang specified the 25th as being the limit provided for the execution of the contract.

"No; I left Wang to fill up the document with the date at his discretion. This rascal Lao-Shen is free to act just when he pleases; he has no stipulation about time to bind him."

"But the policy," said Craig and Fry, "expires on the 30th. He is sure to know enough to make him understand that he has nothing to gain if he delays the act an hour beyond that. No; he will finish his business before that day, or he will leave it alone."

There was not much to be said in answer to this, but Kin-Fo paced up and down the room uneasily. "We must find this Lao-Shen; be he where he may, we must get at him. The letter I gave Wang must be redeemed; at all hazards, at any cost, it must be redeemed: even if I pay the 50,000 dollars for it, I must have it."

"Of course, if you can," assented Craig.

"If I can? I must, I will!" cried Kin-Fo, getting more and more excited; "am I to suffer disappointment after disappointment?" And again he paced the room rapidly.

"I am off again!" he said, after a few minutes.

"At your service, sir," replied the men.

"I am off! You, gentlemen, do as you please; but I start at once."

"We attend you, of course," answered both Craig and Fry with one breath.

"As you like," Kin-Fo repeated.

"We should be failing entirely in our duty to our employers if we were to permit you to travel alone."

"Well, then," said Kin-Fo, "no time to lose."

It was not very likely that it would prove at all a difficult matter to discover Lao-Shen. He was a notorious character, and very few inquiries were enough to elicit the information that after the suppression of the rebellion in which he had taken an active part, he had retired beyond the Great Wall to the north, into the district around the gulf of Leao-Tong, an inlet of the gulf of Pe-Chi-Li. The government had not made terms with him in the same way as it had with many others of the insurgent leaders, but had winked at his retreating beyond the Imperial frontier, when he found himself at liberty to adopt the congenial profession of a highwayman. Altogether, he was a man whose qualifications for the office for which Wang had engaged him could not be disputed.

A little closer investigation soon brought it further to light that Lao-Shen had quite recently been seen in the neighborhood of Foo-Ning, a small port on the Gulf of Leao-Tong, and thither Kin-Fo made up his mind to hasten without delay. At least he would be on the track of the man he sought.

First of all, however, he must go to Le-ou and inform her of his decision. Her grief was pitiable. With tears streaming from her eyes, she besought him to keep far as possible out of the reach of a man hired to be his assassin. Let him leave China altogether. Madness to go near Lao-Shen; better go to the remotest corner of the earth.

As well as he could, Kin-Fo consoled her; he explained that there was no quarter of the world where he could

endure to feel that his life was at the disposal of a mercenary rascal; it was his determination to follow the fellow up, and to find him out; he was going to put a stop to the bargain; he was going to get back that unlucky paper, and he should succeed; he would soon be back again in Pekin; he would be back before the day appointed for the Court mourning came to an end. And he finished by exclaiming, "How fortunate for us that our marriage has been delayed this little while! How dreadful for you, while my life hangs thus in the balance, to be my wife!"

"No, no, indeed," answered Le-ou sadly; "if only I had been your wife, I could have claimed the right of going with you in every hour of danger."

"Far better otherwise," said Kin-Fo; "I had rather face a thousand perils, and die a thousand deaths, than bring you into jeopardy."

Le-ou wept still more bitterly. A tear rose to the eye of Kin-Fo himself, and saying "farewell," he tore himself from her embrace.

The same morning saw the party back again at Tong-Tcheou. Soun repined very sorrowfully at being again disturbed in the rest he was ever seeking; he thought himself the unluckiest of mortals. But there was no help for it.

What now should be the line of action? This was the next question to be decided. There was the choice of going by land or by water. To go by land would take them through a country which under the circumstances was especially perilous, although had they been going no farther than the Great Wall, they would have been tempted to run the risk. But the port of Foo-Ning, whither they were on their way, was far to the east, and if only a vessel could be found to convey them, they would really save time by going by sea. The passage ought only to take a few days. Kin-Fo set about inquiring, and had the satisfaction of learning that a ship on its way to Foo-Ning was at that very time lying at the mouth of the Pei-Ho, and which, if he took one of the fast river-boats down the stream, there was no doubt he would be able to catch. He would be sure to find accommodation for his party on board.

Craig and Fry begged for an hour's grace; they obtained the permission, which was granted with some reluctance, and made use of the time in purchasing a great variety of

apparatus for saving life in case of shipwreck; they bought old-fashioned life-belts, and unwilling to let their charge incur the slightest risk that precaution could anticipate, they bought the recently invented floating-costume of Captain Boyton.

Every preparation was hurried on, and it was still quite early in the afternoon of the 26th, when they all went on board the *Pei-tang,* one of the little river steamers that ply along the Pei-Ho. The river winds so much that the distance between Tong-Tcheou and the river-mouth is as nearly as possible double the length of a straight line drawn from point to point; its banks are artificial and the channel is consequently deep enough to accommodate vessels of considerable burden.

Craig and his colleague made a point throughout the passage of never stirring an inch from the place of duty. They felt a heavier responsibility now brought upon them by the change of circumstances. It was no longer from Wang, whom they knew well enough to recognize at a glance, that they had to defend their charge; it was from Lao-Shen, a desperate Tai-ping, a man they had never seen, who might be in disguise among the passengers, ready at any moment to perpetrate his murderous act. Could they be too vigilant? They scarcely allowed themselves time to eat; when should they be able to find time to sleep?

Soun was all in a flutter, but his disquietude arose from altogether a different cause; the prospect of a sea-voyage thoroughly upset him, and, although the water in the river was perfectly smooth, the nearer the steamboat approached the gulf, the more livid did his countenance become.

"Then you have never been on the sea?" asked Craig.

"Never," he replied.

"You don't seem to think you will like it," added Fry.

"I don't like it at all."

"You must keep your head up," said Craig.

"And your mouth shut," continued Fry.

The poor fellow looked as if he had not the least objection to keep his mouth shut, but he cast one of those lugubrious glances at the widening waters which often betray beforehand the dread of seasickness. He made no reply, but found a place as near the middle of the boat as he could.

Before sunrise the little steamer had reached Ta-koo.

Here were the ruins of the northern and southern forts that were taken in 1860 by the allied army of England and France, when General Collineau on the 24th of August made his grand attack, the gunboats forcing the entrance of the river. A narrow strip, now scarcely occupied at all, was conceded to the French, and there may still be seen the monument erected over the bodies of the officers and men who fell upon that occasion.

Unable to cross the bar of the river, the *Pei-tang* had to land her passengers at Ta-koo. It was a town of considerable importance, and would be found capable of a large development, if only the mandarins would permit a railway to be laid down.

The ship bound for Foo-Ning was to sail that day, so that no time would be lost. The vessel was named the *Sam-Yep;* and Kin-Fo, finding nothing to detain him on shore, hailed a sampan, and went on board at once.

CHAPTER XVI

ON BOARD THE SAM-YEP

A WEEK previously an American ship, chartered by one of the Chino-Californian companies, had cast anchor in the harbor of Ta-koo. She was freighted at the expense of the Ting-Tong agency that had its headquarters at the Laurel Hill Cemetery, San Francisco, where the bodies of the celestials who had died in the United States awaited their transit to their native land, where their religion ordains that they shall be interred. The vessel, which was bound for Canton, conveyed as many as two hundred and fifty coffins, seventy-five of which had been disembarked at Ta-koo, and transferred that morning to the vessel on which Kin-Fo and his party had taken passage, to be despatched to the northern provinces. The voyage, it is true, at that season of the year, would not last more than two or three days, and no other vessel was at present going in the direction of Leao-Tong; otherwise it was not exactly the one they would have been disposed to select.

The *Sam-Yep* was a sea-junk of about three hundred tons burden. Some junks of over one thousand tons draw only six feet of water, enabling them to cross the bars of rivers. Too wide for their length, their beam measuring

a quarter of their keel, they sail badly unless close to the wind, but have the advantage of being able to put about, as it were on their own pivot, as easily as a top. Their enormous helms are pierced with holes, a system very much applauded in China, but the effect of which is open to controversy. Be that as it may, however, these ponderous junks no doubt do brave the sea around the mouths of rivers, and it has been recorded that one of them, chartered by a Canton firm and commanded by an American, conveyed a cargo of tea and porcelain to San Francisco, an instance which proves that it is not impossible for them to stand the open sea. It has also been asserted by competent judges that the Chinese make excellent seamen.

The *Sam-Yep* was of modern construction, her hull being somewhat after the European model. She was built entirely of bamboo sewn together and calked with tow and resin from Cambodga, and was so water-tight that it was considered unnecessary for her to carry a pump in her hold. She floated as light as a cork; her anchor was made of wood of a most durable character; her rigging was of palm-fiber, and remarkably flexible; and she had two masts, a mainmast and foremast, like a lugger. In every respect she seemed perfectly fitted for short cruises.

In looking at her, no one would have imagined that she had temporarily been converted into an enormous hearse, and that so melancholy a cargo had replaced the ordinary chests of tea, bales of silks, and packets of Chinese perfumery. She had laid aside none of her usual decorations; fore and aft waved pennants and streamers; on the prow was painted a great red eye, like that of some huge sea-monster; from the masthead floated the Chinese flag; and two pieces of ordnance glittered brightly in the sunlight. The whole appearance of the vessel was fresh and festive. After all, was she not performing the pleasant duty of restoring to their native land the corpses of those who had expressed their wish to lie there? To Kin-Fo and Soun there was nothing repugnant in the idea of such a cargo. The two Americans doubtless would have preferred something different, but they had no alternative than to perform their office of following Kin-Fo.

A captain and a crew of six men were all that were required to work the junk. It has been said that the mariner's

compass was invented in China; whether that is true or not, the Chinese cruisers never use it; and Captain Yin, the commander of the *Sam-Yep,* as he did not expect to go out of sight of land, was no exception to the general rule.

Captain Yin was a bright, loquacious little man, nearly always smiling, and a living illustration of the theory of perpetual motion. He was never still: eyes, arms, and hands seemed here, there, and everywhere, and moved as fast as his tongue. He rated and scolded his crew, but on the whole he was a capital seaman, had his vessel perfectly under his control, and was well acquainted with the coasts. The handsome sum that Kin-Fo had paid as passage-money had by no means a tendency to lower his spirits; a hundred and fifty taels for a trip of sixty hours was a windfall that did not often fall to his lot.

Kin-Fo and his guardians found quarters, such as they were, in the stern of the vessel. Soun was accommodated near the bow.

After a most careful scrutiny of both captain and crew, Craig and Fry came to the conclusion that there was nothing at all suspicious in the appearance of any of them. It was quite unlikely that they were in collusion with Lao-Shen, as it was the merest chance that had brought Kin-Fo upon the junk at all. Beyond the ordinary perils of a sea voyage, there was no special danger pending over their charge, and they felt justified in relaxing a little of their vigilance.

Kin-Fo felt the relief of being left more to himself. He retired to his cabin, and began to "philosophize," as he expressed it. Here was he, a man who when he was exempt from care amid the luxuries of his yamen, never knew what happiness was. Trouble and anxiety had wrought a transformation in his mind, and now, when once he should gain possession of the fatal letter, he thought he should know true happiness at last. That the letter would be restored to him he had no doubt whatever. It was only a question of money with Lao-Shen; he would as soon receive 50,000 dollars from Kin-Fo during his lifetime as after his death; perhaps sooner, as it would save him the trouble of going to Shang-Hai and presenting himself at the Centenarian Office, a proceeding which, however great might be the clemency of the Government, could not be without a certain amount of risk to a former rebel. The difficulty

was lest the Tai-ping should attack him unawares. He knew nothing of Lao-Shen's movements, while Lao-Shen might be perfectly conversant with his, and the danger would become even more imminent when he landed in the very province where he resided. Nevertheless, Kin-Fo was hopeful, and went on to make brilliant plans for the future, in which of course the young widow at Pekin played no unimportant part.

Soun's meditations, meantime, were of a very different nature. Lying prostrate in his cabin, he was paying his tribute to the malevolent deities of the Gulf of Pe-Chi-Li. He could scarcely collect his thoughts sufficiently to curse his master, or Wang, or the robber Lao-Shen. Ai ai ya! His heart was stupid, his brain was stupid, his ideas were stupid! He could think no more about his tea nor his rice. Ai ai ya! what a fool he had been to enter the service of a man who wanted to come to sea! He would give up his pigtail, he would shave his head, he would become a bonze, if only he could get back to dry land. A yellow dog—yes, a yellow dog—was devouring his liver and his stomach. Ai ai ya!

With a good south breeze, the *Sam-Yep* ran by the three or four miles of sandy shore that here lay from east to west. This part of the gulf was almost deserted; important shipping traffic did not extend beyond a radius of twenty miles from the estuary of the Pei-Ho, and a few merchant junks on short cruises, and about a dozen fishing-boats were all that could be seen near the shore, while out to sea the line of the horizon was quite unbroken.

Observing that all the fishing-boats, even those of only five or six tons' burden, carried one or two small cannon, Craig and Fry asked Captain Yin the reason, and were told that it was for protection against pirates.

"Pirates!" exclaimed Craig. "Surely there are no pirates in the Gulf of Pe-Chi-Li?"

"Why not in the Gulf of Pe-Chi-Li as much as in all the seas of China?" rejoined the captain. And he gave a merry laugh that displayed his two rows of fine white teeth.

"You don't seem to be much afraid of them," said Fry.

"Haven't I two guns to keep them at a distance?" said Yin.

"Are the guns loaded?" Craig inquired.

"Generally; not now."

"Why not now?" asked Fry.

"Because I have no powder on board," calmly responded the captain.

"Then what good will your guns do you?" the Americans exclaimed simultaneously.

The captain laughed again. "If my junk were loaded to the hatchways with opium or tea," he said, "then it would be worth defending; but with its present cargo——"

He shrugged his shoulders with an expressive gesture.

"You gentlemen seem to have rather a dread of pirates," he said presently, "and yet you have no property of any value on board."

Craig and Fry informed him that they had special reasons for wishing to avoid an attack, and asked how the pirates could be aware beforehand of the nature of his freight. Captain Yin pointed to a white flag that was fluttering half-mast high above their heads.

"Pirates know what that means," he said; "they will not take the trouble to rob a vessel laden with coffins."

"But perhaps," insisted Craig, "they may think the white flag is only a *ruse,* and will come on board to see for themselves."

"Let them come, then," said Yin jauntily; "they will soon have to go back the same way as they came."

Craig and Fry said no more, but they could not altogether share the captain's equanimity. A junk of three hundred tons burden, even though carrying nothing but ballast, would be no mean prize for freebooters. They could, however, do no more than quietly await the chapter of accidents, and hope for the best.

The captain, for his part, had neglected nothing that could insure a favorable voyage. Before setting sail he had sacrificed a cock to the presiding deities of the sea, and its feathers were still suspended from the foremast; a few drops of its blood had been sprinkled on the deck, and a small cup of wine thrown overboard had completed the propitiatory offering.

But whether it was that the cock had not been sufficiently plump, or the wine had not been of the choicest vintage, somehow or other the capricious deities seemed

not to have been satisfied. In the course of the day, quite unexpectedly, for the weather was bright and clear, the junk was overtaken by a tremendous gale, an event which the keenest of mariners could not have foreseen. It was about eight o'clock in the evening, and the *Sam-Yep* was preparing to double the promontory beyond which the coast-line extended in a northeasterly direction; that done, she might run straight before the wind, and Captain Yin had every reason to think that in less than twenty-four hours she would be at Foo-Ning.

As the time for arriving drew near, Kin-Fo's impatience to gain possession of the letter increased considerably. With Soun the yearning to get on shore amounted almost to frenzy. Craig and Fry remembered that in three days more their responsibilities concerning the client of the Centenarian would be at an end; at midnight on the 30th of June his policy would expire, the premium had not been renewed, and all anxiety would cease.

Just as the *Sam-Yep* reached the entrance of the Gulf of Leao-Tong the wind veered suddenly to the northeast; it subsequently changed to the north, and two hours later was blowing from the northwest. If Captain Yin had had a barometer on board, he would have noticed that the mercury had made a sudden fall, a rapid rarefaction of the air that betokened an approaching typhoon, the motion of which was lightening the atmospheric strata. Had he been acquainted with the observations of Paddington and Maury, forewarned, he would have endeavored to alter his tack and steer to the northeast, in the hope of getting beyond the attraction of the tempest.

But he did not understand the use of the barometer, and was ignorant of the law of cyclones. He had sacrificed a cock, and therefore was he not insured against every calamity? Nevertheless, superstitious Chinaman though he was, he proved an excellent seaman on the occasion, and his instinct seemed to serve him as well as the science of a European captain.

The typhoon was not of a large extent, consequently its velocity was very great, the rotatory motion being little less than sixty miles an hour. Fortunately it carried the *Sam-Yep* to the east, otherwise she would have been driven on to a coast where she must inevitably have perished. At eleven

o'clock the tempest reached its height. Captain Yin was not laughing now, but he had lost none of his presence of mind. With his hand constantly on the helm, he skillfully steered the light vessel, which rose easily upon the waves, and in all his orders he was ably seconded by his crew.

Kin-Fo had left his cabin, and, clinging to the bulwarks, was contemplating the sea and sky. The clouds, torn to shreds by the hurricane, were hurrying in masses over the surface of the water, while the waves, all white in the blackness of the night, seemed to be sucked up by the typhoon far above their ordinary level. He was neither surprised nor alarmed. This storm was only one of the series of misfortunes that his ill-luck had prepared for him. In this summer season other people might have made a short passage of sixty hours under favorable circumstances; but such luck was not to be his.

Craig and Fry were much more uneasy, not for themselves, but for the interests of the Centenarian. Only let their lives be preserved until midnight on the 30th of June, and the conscientious agents cared not what became of themselves or their charge afterward.

As for Soun, to his mind the junk was in no greater danger now than she had been ever since he came on board. Stormy or calm, it was all alike to him. Ai ai ya! The passengers down in the hold had the best of it; they felt neither rolling nor pitching; he wished he were among them. Ai ai ya!

For the space of three hours the junk really was in a critical position. A false turn of the helm, and she would have been lost, for the sea would have dashed over her deck; and, although, like a pail, she could not capsize, there was every chance that she might fill and founder. Tossed as she was by the waves, it was impossible to keep her in any constant direction, nor could any estimate be made as to the course she was taking.

By some happy chance, however, she ultimately gained without serious damage the center of the great atmospheric disturbance that extended over an area of sixty miles. Here, like a placid lake in the midst of an angry ocean, was a tract of smooth water, two or three miles in area, where the wind was scarcely perceptible.

The junk, which had been driven thither under bare poles, was now in safety. Toward three o'clock in the morning the fury of the cyclone ceased almost as if by magic, and the angry waters round the little lake subsided into calmness. But when daylight dawned, no land was in sight. The *Sam-Yep* was the center of a barren waste of sea and sky.

CHAPTER XVIII
THE CARGO

"WHERE are we, Captain Yin?" Kin-Fo asked after the danger was all over.

"I hardly know," replied the captain, who had quite recovered his jovial looks.

"Are we in the Gulf of Pe-Chi-Li?"

"Not unlikely."

"Or do you think we have been driven into the Gulf of Leao-Tong?"

"Very probably."

"Where, then, are we going to land?"

"Just where the wind takes us."

"When?"

"That's more than I can tell you."

Kin-Fo was beginning to lose his temper. "A true Chinaman always knows his whereabouts," he said, quoting a Chinese proverb.

"Ah! that means on land, not at sea!" answered the captain, grinning from ear to ear.

"I don't see anything to laugh at," said Kin-Fo impatiently.

"Nor do I see anything to cry at," retorted Yin.

It might be true that there was nothing really alarming in the situation, but it was quite obvious that the captain did not know where he was; without a compass he had no means of judging in what direction his ship had been driven by the tempest, during which the wind had been blowing from such different quarters, and while, with her sails furled and her helm useless, she had been the mere plaything of the hurricane.

But whether the junk had been carried into one gulf or

the other, there could be no hesitation now about the necessity of putting her head to the west; ultimately, land must be sighted in that direction. Had it been in his power, the captain would forthwith have hoisted sail and followed the sun, which was once more shining, though only faintly; but there was not a breath of wind; the typhoon had been succeeded by a dead calm; not a ripple played upon the smooth undulations that just lifted up the vessel and allowed her to sink again without moving her a foot forward. A heavy vapor hung over the sea, and the general aspect was in striking contrast to the commotion of the previous night. It was one of those calms locally known as "white calms."

"And how long is this going to last?" said Kin-Fo.

"No telling," replied the captain with perfect composure; "at this season of the year calms sometimes continue for weeks."

"Weeks!" repeated Kin-Fo; "do you suppose I am to stay here for weeks?"

"No help for it, my dear sir, unless by good luck we can manage to get taken in tow."

"Confound the junk! what a fool I was to be caught coming on board!"

"Will you allow me to offer you two little bits of advice? Be like other folks, and don't grumble at the weather which you can't alter; and, secondly, do as I am going to do; go to bed and get some comfortable sleep."

And with a philosophy that was worthy of Wang himself, the captain retired to his cabin, leaving only a few men on deck.

For the next quarter of an hour Kin-Fo paced backward and forward, drumming his fingers upon his folded arms; then, casting a glance at the desolate scene around, he made up his mind to go to his cabin, and left the deck without saying a word to Craig and Fry, who had been lounging meanwhile against the taffrail, not speaking a word to each other, but no doubt holding mutual intercourse by silent sympathy. They had heard all that passed between Kin-Fo and the captain, but to say the truth, they really were not concerned at the delay which was giving so much annoyance to the young man; if they were losing anything in time, they were gaining in security, for as long as Kin-Fo was on board the *Sam-Yep,* was he not free from any chance

of being attacked by Lao-Shen? moreover, the period of their engagement and consequently of their responsibility was close at hand; two days more and a whole band of Tai-pings might assail him, and it would not be their duty to risk a hair of their heads to protect him. Practical Yankees as they were, they were devoted to the client of the Centenarian so long as he represented the sum of 200,000 dollars; they would be utterly indifferent when that interest lapsed.

Under these circumstances there was nothing to prevent them from sitting down to their luncheon with a capital appetite. The food was excellent; they partook of the same dishes, consumed the same quantities of bread and the same number of slices of meat; they drank Bidulph's health in the same number of glasses of wine, and afterward smoked precisely the same number of cigarettes. If not by birth, they were Siamese twins in taste and habit.

The day passed on without incident or accident; there was still the "woolly" sky; still the smooth sea; and nothing to disturb the general monotony.

Toward four o'clock in the afternoon, poor Soun made his appearance on deck. He reeled, he staggered as if he were drunk, though probably he had never in all his life been so abstemious before. His complexion was blue and green, verging to yellow; probably when he got on shore again it would be as usual, orange; when he was angry he would flush into crimson, and thus in a very short period his countenance would have exhibited all the colors of the rainbow.

Keeping his eyes half-closed, and not daring to look beyond the bulwarks, he stumbled up to Craig and Fry, and said, "Are we nearly there?"

"No," they answered.

"Not nearly?"

"No."

"Ai ai ya!" he moaned, and flung himself down at the foot of the mast, wriggling as if in convulsions, which made his miserable little *queue* shake like a puppy's tail.

Earlier in the day Captain Yin had given orders, very prudently, for the hatchways to be opened that the sun might dry up the water that during the typhoon had been shipped into the hold. Craig and Fry had been promenading

the deck, repeatedly pausing and looking down through the middle hatchway, until at last, prompted by curiosity, they agreed to go below.

Except just where the light was admitted from above, the hold was very dark; but after a short time the eye grew accustomed to the obscurity, and it was quite possible to distinguish the way in which the singular cargo had been stowed. The hold was not divided, as in most junks, into partitions, but was open from end to end, and the whole of it appropriated to this strange consignment, the crew having to find their berths forward. Piled up one upon another, and arrayed on both sides, were the seventy-five coffins bound for Foo-Ning, all fastened quite securely so as to prevent any oscillation that might imperil the ship, a passage being left along the middle, the end of which, remote from the hatchway, was sunk in gloom.

Craig and Fry walked silently and softly, as though they were treading the floor of a mausoleum. There was something of awe mingling with their curiosity. The coffins were of all sizes, a small proportion of them being costly and elaborate, the generality perfectly plain. Of the emigrants whom necessity drives across the Pacific, it is very few that make a fortune or realize a competency in the diggings of California, or in the mines of Nevada and Colorado; nearly all die as impoverished as they went out; but all, whatever their wealth or poverty, are without exception and with equal care brought back to their native land.

About ten of the coffins were made of valuable wood adorned with all the richness that Chinese fancy could devise; but the rest were merely four planks with ends, put together in the roughest manner and painted yellow; every one of them bore the name and address of its tenant, and as Craig and Fry passed along they kept on reading such names as Lien-Foo of Yun-Ping-Fu, Nan-Loon of Foo-Ning, and remarked that there seemed no confusion; every corpse could be conveyed to its destination to await in field, in orchard, or in plain, its ultimate interment in Chinese soil.

"Well packed!" whispered Craig.

"Well packed!" whispered Fry.

They spoke calmly as they would about a consignment of ordinary goods from San Francisco or New York.

Having proceeded to the farther end of the passage where it was most gloomy, they turned and looked along the avenue of that temporary cemetery toward the light; they were on the point of returning, when a slight sound attracted their attention. "A rat!" they said.

"I should think a rat would prefer a cargo of rice," said Craig.

"Or of maize," added Fry.

The noise continued. It was like a scratching with nails or claws. It was on the starboard side, and came from about the level of their heads; consequently from the upper tier of coffins.

The men hissed as they would to scare away a rat. Still the scratching went on. They listened with bated breath. Evidently the sound came from inside one of the coffins.

"Some Chinaman buried before he was dead," said Craig.

"And just come to life again," continued Fry.

They went close up to the coffin, and laid their hands upon it; it did not admit of a doubt that there was movement within. "This means mischief!" they muttered.

The same idea had simultaneously occurred to them both, that a new danger was threatening the client in their charge.

Raising their hands, they could feel that the lid of the coffin was being gently lifted up. With the most perfect composure they waited to see what would follow next. They did not make a movement. It was too dark for them to distinguish anything plainly, but they were not mistaken in thinking they saw a coffin lid slowly opening on the larboard side.

A whisper was next heard. A whisper followed in reply.

"Is that you, Cono?"

"Is that you, Fa-Kien?"

"Is it to be to-night?"

"Yes, to-night."

"Before the moon rises?"

"Yes, in the second watch."

"Do the others know?"

"They have all been told."

"I shall be glad to get out of this."

"Ay, so shall we all."

"Thirty-six hours in a coffin is no joke!"

"You are right."

"But Lao-Shen ordered it."

"Hush, hush! what's that?"

The last exclamation was caused by Craig and Fry making an involuntary movement at the mention of Lao-Shen; but they did not speak nor move again.

There was a slight pause, after which the coffin-lids gently closed themselves again, and there was complete silence.

Stealthily on hands and knees, Craig and Fry made their way back through the hatchway on to the deck, and in a moment were locked in their own cabin, where they could converse without risk of being overheard.

"Dead men who talk—" began Craig.

"Are not dead yet," concluded Fry.

The mere mentioning of Lao-Shen's name under these somewhat ghastly circumstances had been enough to reveal the whole truth. It was evident that the Tai-ping had employed some agents who had found their way on board, and it did not admit of much doubt that they had only succeeded by the connivance of the captain. The coffins had been disembarked from the American ships, and had had to remain for a day or two to await the arrival of the *Sam-Yep,* and during that time a number of them had been broken open, the corpses removed, and their places supplied by the confederates of Lao-Shen. How it had transpired that Kin-Fo was among the passengers of the *Sam-Yep* was a mystery they could not explain; but they recollected that they had noticed suspicious characters on board from the time of embarkation, and acknowledged that it would be a thing discreditable to themselves if, after all, the office they represented should lose the two hundred thousand dollars at stake.

They were not the men to lose their presence of mind; they were facing a grave and unexpected emergency; there was not much time in which to form their plans; the deed was to be done before the second watch; there was not much scope for deliberation; there was only one conclusion to be arrived at—before the second watch Kin-Fo must be away from the junk.

How the escape was to be made was a question more easy to ask than to answer. The only boat belonging to

the ship was a cumbrous craft that it would take the whole crew to lower to the water, and if the captain were an accomplice in the plot, the crew could not be enlisted to lend a helping hand. The project of using the boat had to be abandoned.

Seven o'clock, and the captain was still in his cabin. Was it not likely he was only waiting in solitude until the appointed time had passed, and the deed was done? The junk was floating adrift; there was no watch, why should there be? A sailor, all alone, was slumbering in the bows. If only the appliances were at hand, the opportunity for escape was complete. Had they been anxious to get away from a fire-ship, they scarcely could have been more excited. A thought struck them; there was not a moment to spare to discuss it; it must be put into execution now, at once.

Opening the door of Kin-Fo's cabin, they touched him gently; he was fast asleep; they touched him again.

"What do you want with me?" he said.

They told him as concisely as they could all the facts; he did not seem at all alarmed; he pondered a moment, and asked, "Why not throw the rascals overboard?"

"That is quite out of the question," they replied. "There are too many against us."

"Then are we to do nothing?" said Kin-Fo.

"Do as we tell you," answered Craig; "we have made our plans."

"Let me hear," said Kin-Fo, in some surprise.

"Take this dress; ask no questions; put it on, and be ready!"

The men opened a parcel they had brought with them. It contained four sets of the swimming apparatus just invented by Captain Boyton. They gave a set to Kin-Fo, saying, "We have more for ourselves, and one for Soun."

"Go and fetch Soun," he bade them.

And Soun was brought in, looking as if he were suffering from an attack of paralysis.

"You are to put this on," said his master.

But Soun was incapable of helping himself, and while he kept on moaning, "Ai ai ya," the others contrived to drag him into the waterproof attire.

Eight o'clock, and they were all equipped; they looked like four great seals just going to plunge into the frozen

waters, although it must be owned that Soun was almost too flabby in his condition to be compared to so lithe a creature.

The junk continued to float in absolute stillness upon the unruffled sea; Craig and Fry opened one of the portholes of the cabin, and quietly dropped Soun down without more ado. Kin-Fo cautiously followed; Craig and Fry only stayed to make sure that they had provided themselves with all the necessary appurtenances, and plunged in after them.

So quiet were all their movements that no one on board was aware that four of the passengers had quitted the *Sam-Yep*.

CHAPTER XVIII

AFLOAT

Captain Boyton's apparatus is a gutta-percha suit, consisting of leggings, tunic, and cap. But though impervious to water, the material would not be impervious to cold, were it not that the garments are made with an outer and an inner layer between which may be admitted a certain quantity of air. The air serves the double purpose of maintaining the apparatus upon the surface of the water and preventing the chill that would otherwise ensue from long exposure.

The joints of the separate pieces of the costume are perfectly water-tight. The leggings terminate beneath the feet with heavy soles, and are clasped at the waist with a metal belt, which is made wide enough to allow free movement to the body. The jacket is fixed into the belt, and has a solid collar, to which in its turn is attached the cap, which is drawn tightly over the forehead, cheeks and chin by means of an elastic border, leaving only the eyes, mouth, and nose exposed.

Several gutta-percha tubes are attached to the jacket to admit the air, which can be regulated to any density, so that a traveler may float upright with the water up to his neck or only to his waist, or may lie horizontally upon its surface, all the time in perfect safety and with complete liberty of action.

The practical utility of the apparatus has already been

proved in a way that does much credit to its inventor. To make it complete there are several other appurtenances: a waterproof bag that is slung over the shoulder, and contains various useful articles; a small pole which can be attached to the foot by a socket, and carries a small sail; and a light paddle, which may be used either as an oar or a rudder, as circumstances may require.

Thus equipped, Kin-Fo, Craig, Fry, and Soun floated off, and a very few strokes of their paddles carried them a considerable distance from the junk. The night was very dark, and even if Captain Yin or any of his men had been on deck, they would not have perceived the fugitives, and no one could have the slightest suspicion that they were escaping.

The second watch, the time mentioned by the pretended corpse, would be about the middle of the night, consequently Kin-Fo and his companions had several hours' grace during which they hoped to get a safe distance from the *Sam-Yep*. A very slight breeze was beginning to ruffle the surface of the water, but not enough to make them depend on any other means except their paddles for their progress.

In a very few minutes Kin-Fo, Craig, and Fry, grew accustomed to their strange equipment, and were able to maneuver so well, that they could, without a moment's hesitation, assume any attitude or make any movement they desired. Soun for a time had to be taken in tow, but he very quickly recovered his energies, and felt far more at his ease than he had been on board the junk. All sensation of seasickness had left him, and the relief of finding himself floating up to his waist in the sea, instead of being subject to the pitching, tossing, and heaving of a ship, was very great.

But although he was no longer ill, he was in considerable alarm. Nothing possessed him but that he should be devoured by sharks, and he was continually drawing up his legs, as though he felt them already being snapped at. His fears, it must be owned, were not altogether without foundation.

It was a strange vicissitude to which fortune had now called Kin-Fo and his companions. On and on they went, lying almost flat upon their backs to paddle, and rising to the perpendicular when they required a rest. An hour

after leaving the junk the party found themselves about half a mile distant. They came to a standstill, resting on their paddles, and began to hold a whispered consultation.

"That rascal of a captain!" said Craig, in order to broach the subject that was of course uppermost in his mind.

"And that scoundrel Lao-Shen!" added Fry.

"Are you surprised?" said Kin-Fo; "I am never surprised at anything now."

"I cannot understand how those fellows found out that you were going to take passage on board that junk," replied Craig.

"Well, it doesn't matter much now that we are safe," said Kin-Fo composedly.

"Safe!" exclaimed Craig; "we are not safe as long as the *Sam-Yep* is in sight."

"What is to be done, then?" inquired Kin-Fo.

"We must take some refreshment and go on again, so that we may be out of sight at daybreak."

Admitting a little more air into his apparatus, Fry allowed himself to rise till the water was about level with his waist, and then opening his bag, took out a bottle and a glass. He filled the glass with brandy, and handed it to Kin-Fo, who, without requiring any pressing, drained it to the bottom. Craig and Fry helped themselves, and Soun was not forgotten.

"How are you now?" asked Craig, when Soun had emptied his glass.

"Much better, thank you," said Soun; "but I should like something to eat."

"We will have our breakfast at daybreak, and then you shall have some tea."

Soun made a wry face.

"Cold?" he asked.

"No; hot," said Craig.

Soun's countenance brightened.

"But how will you manage that?" he inquired.

"I shall make a fire."

"Then why wait till the morning?" urged Soun.

"Why, you stupid fellow, you don't want Captain Yin and his accomplices to see our light, do you?"

"No, O no."

"Then have patience, and wait till the proper time."

WANG PREPARES THE DEATH STROKE.

One day chance aroused a new sensation in him. He passed the door of the philosopher's room. Wang was trying the point of a dagger, and wetting it with some liquid in a blue glass bottle. As Kin-Fo glanced into the room the philosopher brandished the dagger around, in order to try it. Kin-Fo's face changed at the sight of this, and the blood mounted to his eyes; he thought to himself, "this is the day in which he is to perform the deed."—Page 173.

Cordes 1911

The appearance of the party during this colloquy was irresistibly comical; the slight undulation of the water kept them bobbing up and down like so many corks, or like the hammers of a pianoforte when the keys are touched. Kin-Fo presently remarked that the wind was beginning to freshen.

"Let us set our sails, then," said Craig and Fry.

But just as they were preparing to erect their little masts, Soun uttered a loud cry of terror.

"Be quiet, you fool!" angrily whispered his master, "do you want us to be discovered?"

"I thought," muttered Soun, "I saw a monster—a shark—quite close to me; I thought I felt it, too."

Craig carefully examined the surface of the water, and said that it was quite a mistake on Soun's part; no shark was there at all.

Kin-Fo laid his hand on his servant's shoulder.

"Understand, Soun, that you are not to be a coward," he said. "You are not to cry out, mind, even if your leg is snapped off."

"If you make any outcry," added Fry, "we will cut a slit in your jacket, and send you to the bottom of the sea, where you may bellow to your heart's content."

Thus adjured, the unfortunate Soun, though by no means consoled, dared not utter another word. It seemed as though his troubles were never to have an end, and he began to think that the miseries of seasickness were scarcely worse than the tortures of terror.

Kin-Fo had been right when he said that the wind was freshening. Even if it were only one of the slight breezes that subside at sunrise, it must be utilized to increase the distance between them and the *Sam-Yep*. When Lao-Shen's people discovered that Kin-Fo was no longer in his cabin, they would assuredly begin to look about for him, and if any of them were in sight, the ship's boat would greatly facilitate their capture; consequently it was of the utmost importance to be far away before dawn.

The wind fortunately was blowing from the east. Whether they had been carried by the hurricane into the Gulf of Leao-Tong, the Gulf of Pe-Chi-Li, or even into the Yellow Sea, a westerly course must in any case take them toward the coast, where they had every chance of

being picked up by some merchant vessel on its way to the mouth of the Pei-Ho, or by one of the fishing-boats plying day and night about the shore. If, on the contrary, the wind had come from the west, and the *Sam-Yep* had been driven south of Corea, Kin-Fo and his companions would have had no chance of rescue; they must either have been borne away on to the open sea, or floated ultimately on to the shores of Japan as lifeless corpses, which the dress they wore would not allow to sink.

It was now about ten o'clock. The moon would rise shortly before midnight, and there was no time to be lost. According to Craig and Fry's directions, preparations were made for hoisting sail. The process was very simple. Each gutta-percha suit had a socket attached to the sole of the right foot, which was intended to hold the short pole that served for a mast. The party first of all stretched themselves on their backs, brought their foot within reach of their hands by bending the knee, and fixed the mast in its place, having previously attached the halyard of the little sail to its extremity. At a signal from Fry and Craig, each man simultaneously pulled at his halyard, and hoisted the upper corner of his triangular sail to the top of the mast. The halyards were then made fast to the metal waistbands, the sheets were held in the hand, and they all sailed off like a flotilla of "scaphanders," an appellation to which they had more right than the submarine workmen to whom it is often improperly applied.

In the course of ten minutes they were able to steer with perfect ease and security; they kept equal pace with one another, and glided easily along the water like so many seagulls with their wings extended to the breeze. Their progress was greatly facilitated by the condition of the sea; not a wave disturbed the long quiet undulation of its surface, so that there was no splash or surf to inconvenience them.

Two or three times, Soun, forgetting Craig and Fry's instructions, was foolish enough to turn his head, and in so doing swallowed several mouthfuls of salt water. Experience, however, soon taught him better. Still he could not overcome his dread of sharks. It was explained to him that he ran less risk in a horizontal than in a vertical position, since the formation of a shark's jaw obliges it to turn over on to its back before seizing its prey, and consequently

it is difficult for it to grasp a floating object; it was furthermore pointed out to him that these voracious brutes prefer inanimate bodies to those with any power of motion. Soun accordingly made up his mind not to keep still for a moment, and was all the happier for his efforts.

For about an hour the "scaphanders" sailed on. A shorter time would not have sufficed to carry them out of reach of the junk, a longer would have exhausted them; already their arms were getting weary with the strain put upon them by the tension of the sails.

Craig and Fry gave the signal for stopping. Instantly the sheets were loosened, and all, with the exception of Soun, who preferred remaining on the cautious side, resumed a perpendicular position.

"Five minutes' rest, sir," said Craig to Kin-Fo.

"And another glass of brandy," said Fry.

Kin-Fo assented willingly to both propositions. A little stimulant was all they required at present; having dined shortly before leaving the junk, they could well afford to wait for food until the morning. Neither did they suffer at all from cold; the layer of air between their bodies and the water protected them from any chill, and their temperature had not abated a degree since they made their start.

Was the *Sam-Yep* still in sight? Fry carefully swept the eastern horizon with a night-glass that he drew from his bag, but no sign of her was visible against the dim background of the sky. The night was rather foggy; there were very few stars, and the planets looked almost like nebulæ in the firmament. The waning moon, however, would not be long in rising, and would probably disperse the mist.

"The rascals are still asleep," said Fry.

"They haven't taken advantage of the breeze," said Craig.

Kin-Fo, tightening his sheet, and spreading his sail to the wind, now professed himself ready to make another start, and accordingly they all resumed their course, the wind being not quite so strong as before.

As they were proceeding toward the west, they would be unable to observe the moon as she rose in the east; her light, however, would necessarily illuminate the opposite horizon, of which it was important for them to make a careful observation. If instead of a clearly defined circle

between sea and sky, the line should be broken and refract the lunar rays, they might be certain that the shore was in sight; and as the coast was everywhere open and unbeaten by surf, a landing could be effected without danger in almost any part.

About twelve o'clock a faint light began to play upon the vapors overhead, a sign that the moon was rising above the water. Neither Kin-Fo nor his companions turned their heads. Again the breeze had freshened, and while it helped to disperse the fog, was carrying them along with considerable rapidity, so that quite a furrow of foam followed in their wake. The atmosphere became clearer and clearer; the constellations shone out more brightly, and the moon, changing from a coppery red to a silvery white, soon illumined the whole of the surrounding space.

All at once Craig uttered a loud oath.

"The junk!" he cried.

"Down with the sails!" exclaimed Fry.

In an instant the four sails were lowered, and the masts removed from their sockets. All the party resumed an upright position, and looked behind them. There, too truly, was the outline of the junk, with all sails spread, about a mile away.

Captain Yin, they did not doubt, had become aware of Kin-Fo's escape, and had at once set out in pursuit. Unless the fugitives could contrive to avoid discovery on the bright surface of the water, in another quarter of an hour they would be in the hands of the captain and his accomplices.

"Heads down!" said Craig.

His order was understood. A little more air was ejected from the apparatus, and all four men sank until only their heads emerged from the waves. There they waited without a sound or a motion.

The junk was advancing rapidly, its upper sails casting great shadows on the sea. In five minutes' time it was within half a mile of them, and they could see the sailors moving to and fro, and the captain at the helm. All at once a great shout was heard; a crowd of men had rushed upon the deck, and were apparently attacking the crew. The uproar was terrible; yells of rage and execration alternated with shrieks of agony and despair. Then all was still; the clamor was hushed; nothing was heard but a constant splash,

splash, at the side of the junk, indicating that bodies were being thrown overboard.

After all, then, Captain Yin and his crew had not been in league with Lao-Shen and his troop; the poor fellows, on the contrary, had themselves been the victims of the band of rascals who had smuggled themselves on board with no other design than that of gaining possession of the junk. The pirates had had no idea that Kin-Fo was a fellow-passenger, and were he discovered now, it was certain that neither he nor any of his companions could expect to find mercy at their hands.

The *Sam-Yep* continued her course. She was close upon them now, but by the happiest chance she cast upon them the shadow of her sails. For an instant they dived beneath the waves. When they rose again, the junk had passed, and they were safe.

A corpse that was floating by they recognized as that of Captain Yin, with a poignard in his side. For a time the ample folds of his garments sustained him upon the surface of the water. Then he sank, never to rise again.

Thus by a foul massacre had perished the genial, light-hearted commander of the *Sam-Yep*.

Ten minutes later the junk had disappeared in the west, and Kin-Fo, Craig, Fry, and Soun were all alone in the waste of water.

CHAPTER XIX

A TIGER-SHARK

In the course of three hours day began to break, and before it was quite light the junk was out of sight. Though sailing in the same direction, the "scaphanders" had of course been unable to keep pace with her, and she was already nine or ten miles away.

All danger from that quarter was therefore at an end; nevertheless the situation was not altogether satisfactory. Far as the eye could reach there was no indication of land, nor was there a single vessel of any kind in sight; whether they were in the Gulf of Pe-Chi-Li or in the Yellow Sea was still uncertain.

The direction taken by the junk, however, demonstrated that sooner or later land would be found toward the west,

and, as a slight breeze still ruffled the waters, it was advisable to continue sailing that way.

It was now necessary to satisfy the cravings of hunger, which, after a ten hours' fast, were very keen.

"We will make a good breakfast," said Craig and Fry.

Kin-Fo gladly assented. Soun smacked his lips with delight, and for a time quite forgot his fear of being devoured.

The waterproof bag was again in requisition. Fry produced some bread and some excellent preserved meat, and the meal, though not as elaborate in its *menu* as an ordinary Chinese repast, was nevertheless most heartily enjoyed.

The bag contained provisions enough for one more day, by which time Craig and Fry said they might all hope to be on shore. Kin-Fo asked them what ground they had for such a hope? They replied that their good luck seemed to be returning to them; they were free of the dangerous junk, and never since they had had the honor of attending Kin-Fo had they been in so secure a position as now.

"All the Tai-pings in the world, sir, could not reach you here," said Craig.

"And considering that you are equivalent to two hundred thousand dollars, you float excellently well," said Fry.

Kin-Fo smiled.

"It is all owing to you, gentlemen," he said, "that I am afloat at all. Had it not been for you, I should have had the fate of poor Captain Yin."

"And so should I," echoed Soun, gulping down a huge mouthful of bread.

"You will not be the losers for your attention," Kin-Fo continued; "I shall never forget how much I owe you."

"You owe us nothing," said Craig; "we are the servants of the Centenarian."

"And our great hope is," said Fry, "that the Centenarian will never owe anything to you."

Whatever might be their motive, Kin-Fo could not be otherwise than touched by their zealous devotion.

"We will talk about this again," said he, "when Lao-Shen has restored that unfortunate letter."

Craig and Fry smiled significantly, but made no reply.

Presently, in fun, Kin-Fo asked Soun to bring him some tea.

"All right," said Fry, before Soun had time to reply to his master's joke.

Again opening his bag, he produced a little appliance which may well be reckoned an indispensable accompaniment to the Boyton apparatus, and which serves the double purpose of a lamp and a stove. It consisted simply of a tube five or six inches in length, furnished with a tap-top and bottom, the whole being inserted into a sheet of cork, like the floating thermometers used in public baths.

After placing it upon the surface of the water, Fry turned on the taps, one with each hand, and in an instant a flame started from the extremity of the funnel, sufficiently large to diffuse a perceptible heat.

"There's your stove," said Fry.

Soun could not believe his eyes.

"Why, you made fire out of water!" he exclaimed.

"Yes, he made it of water and phosphuret of calcium," said Craig.

The instrument, in fact, was constructed so as to utilize a singular property of phosphuret of calcium, which in contact with water produces phosphuretted hydrogen. The gas burns spontaneously, and cannot be extinguished by either wind or rain. It is consequently employed now for lighting all the improved life-buoys, which immediately they touch the water, eject a long flame, by means of which any one who has fallen overboard by night is at once able to see the means thrown out for his rescue.

While the hydrogen was burning, Craig held over it a little saucepan, containing some fresh water which he had drawn from a little keg, also carried in the bag. As soon as the water was boiling, he poured it into a teapot, in which a few pinches of tea had already been placed. The whole party then partook of the decoction, and even Kin-Fo and Soun, although it was not brewed in Chinese fashion, had no fault to find with it. It formed, in fact, a most acceptable addition to the breakfast. All that they required now was some knowledge of their whereabouts. At no distant day a sextant and chronometer will unquestionably be added to the Boyton apparatus, and then shipwrecked mariners will no longer be at a loss to ascertain their position upon the ocean.

Thus refreshed the little party once again set sail. For

hours the wind blew steadily, and they rarely had to use their paddles as rudders. The gentle gliding movement in a horizontal position had a tendency to make them sleepy; but under the circumstances sleep must not be thought of, and in order to resist it, Craig and Fry smoked cigars, after the fashion of dandies in a swimming bath.

Several times the "scaphanders" were startled by the gambols of some marine animals that put Soun into a great state of alarm; these were nothing more, however, than harmless porpoises, probably astonished at the strange beings whom they now saw for the first time invading their native element. In great herds, they darted along with the speed of arrows, their huge slimy bodies glistening like emeralds beneath the water; now and then leaping up some five or six feet into the air, and turning a somersault that displayed the remarkable suppleness of their muscles. So great was their speed, far surpassing that of the fleetest ships, that Kin-Fo, in spite of the jerks and plunges, would fain have been taken in tow by one of them.

Toward noon the wind lulled into short puffs, and finally dropped altogether. The little sails fell idly against the masts; no longer was there any tension upon the sheets, nor any furrow of foam left behind in the wake.

"This is bad," said Craig.

"Very unfortunate," assented Fry.

They all came to a standstill. The masts were taken from the sockets, the sails struck, and each member of the party, having placed himself in an upright position, examined the horizon.

It was still deserted. Not a sail nor a trail of smoke was in sight. A scorching sun had absorbed all vapor and rarefied the air. The water would not have been cold for the travelers, even had they not been protected by their double covering of gutta-percha.

Sanguine as Craig and Fry might be as to the final issue of events, they could scarcely fail to be somewhat uneasy now. They had no means of judging how far they had sailed in the course of the last sixteen hours, and the non-appearance of any coast or passing vessel became more and more inexplicable. Still, neither they nor Kin-Fo were the men to despair as long as hope remained, and as they had provisions enough for another day, and the weather showed

no symptoms of growing stormy, they determined to make good use of their paddles, and to push on. The signal for starting was given, and now on their backs, now on their faces, they persevered in their westerly course.

Progress was far from rapid. To arms unaccustomed to the work, the manipulation of the paddles was very fatiguing. Poor Soun was full of complaints; and he lagged so much behind the others that they frequently had to wait until he caught them up. His master scolded, abused, and threatened him, but all in vain; Soun knew that his pigtail was safe in his gutta-percha cap; still, the fear of being left behind sufficed to prevent him from falling very far into the rear.

Toward two o'clock some sea-gulls were observed, and although these birds are often seen far out at sea, their appearance could not but be taken as an indication that land was most probably within an accessible distance.

An hour later they all got entangled in a bed of seaweed, from which they had considerable trouble to extricate themselves; they floundered about like fish in a drag-net, and were obliged to use knives to set themselves free. The result was a delay of about half an hour, and an outlay of strength which could ill be spared.

At four o'clock, greatly exhausted, they made another halt. A fresh breeze had sprung up, but unfortunately it was from the south. As they could not trim their sails, they were afraid to use them at all, lest they should be carried northward and lose the headway they had made toward the west.

The halt was rather long, for, besides resting their weary limbs, they were glad to recruit themselves again with their provisions; but the dinner was not so festive a meal as the breakfast had been. Matters did not look quite so promising now; night was coming on; the wind was increasing from the south, and no one knew precisely what to do.

Kin-Fo leaned in gloomy silence upon his paddle, his brows knit, but more with vexation than alarm. Soun kept on grumbling and whining, and began to sneeze as though he were attacked with influenza. Craig and Fry felt that something was expected of them, but were puzzled how to act.

By a happy chance, a solution came to their bewilder-

ment. About five o'clock, pointing suddenly toward the south, they both exclaimed,

"A sail!"

Sure enough, about three miles to windward, a vessel was bearing down toward them, and, if she held her present course, would probably pass within a short distance of the spot where they were. Not a moment was to be lost in making their way toward her. The opportunity for deliverance must not be allowed to slip. Instantly the paddles were brought into use, and nearer and nearer drew the vessel in the freshening breeze. It was only a fishing-smack, but it indicated that the land could not be very far distant, for the Chinese fishermen rarely venture far out to sea.

Encouraging the others to follow, Kin-Fo paddled with all his might, darting over the surface of the water like a skiff; and Soun, in his eagerness not to be left behind, worked away so hard that he fairly outstripped his master.

Half a mile more, and they would be within earshot of the boat, even if they had not already been observed. The fear was, that the fishermen, when they saw such strange creatures in the water, might take to flight. Nevertheless the attempt to reach them must be made.

The distance to be accomplished was growing inconsiderable, when Soun, who was still in advance, gave a startling cry of terror:

"A shark! a shark!"

And it was no false alarm. About twenty paces ahead could be seen the fins of a tiger-shark, a voracious creature peculiar to these waters, and truly worthy of its name.

"Out with your knives!" shouted Craig and Fry.

The weapons, such as they were, were quickly produced. Soun, meantime, deeming prudence the better part of valor, had beat a hasty retreat behind the rest. The shark was rapidly bearing down upon them, and for an instant his huge body, all streaked and spotted with green, rose above the waters. It was at least sixteen feet in length, a truly hideous monster!

Turning half over on to its back, it was preparing to make a snap at Kin-Fo, who, quite calm and collected, planted his paddle on its back, and, with a vigorous thrust, sent himself flying far out of the way. Craig and Fry drew close up, ready either for attack or defense.

The shark dived for a second, and returned to the charge, its huge mouth bristling with four rows of cruel teeth. Kin-Fo attempted to repeat his former maneuver, but this time the paddle came in contact with the creature's jaw, and was snapped off short. Half lying on its side, the shark was just rushing once more upon its prey, when the water became blood-red. Craig and Fry, with the long blades of their American knives, had succeeded in penetrating the tough skin of the brute. The hideous jaw opened and closed again with a terrible snap. The shark seemed in agonies, and began to lash the water with its formidable tail, one stroke catching Fry on his side, and dashing him ten feet away. Craig uttered a cry of pain, as if he had received the blow himself. But Fry was not hurt; his gutta-percha covering had protected him from injury, and he returned to the attack with redoubled vigor.

The shark turned and turned again. Kin-Fo had contrived to lodge the end of his broken paddle in the socket of its eye, and, at the risk of being cut in two, managed to hold it firmly there, while Craig and Fry endeavored to pierce the creature's heart. Their attempt was evidently successful, for almost directly the shark, with one last struggle, sank beneath the bloody waters.

"Hurrah! hurrah!" shouted Craig and Fry, brandishing their knives in triumph.

"Thanks! thanks!" was all Kin-Fo could say.

"No thanks to us," said Craig; "two hundred thousand dollars was too good a mouthful for that brute!"

Fry cordially assented.

And where, meantime, was Soun? The coward, making off as fast as his paddle would carry him, had got within three cables' length of the fishing-boat; but his precaution was almost the means of his coming to grief.

The fishermen, perceiving what they supposed to be a strange animal in the water, prepared to catch it as they would a seal or a dolphin, and a long rope with a hook attached was thrown overboard. The hook caught Soun by the waist-belt, and slipping upward, made a rent in his gutta-percha jacket the whole length of his back. Sustained now only by his inflated leggings, he rolled right over with his head in the water, and his heels in the air.

Kin-Fo, Craig, and Fry had by this time reached the

spot, and were calling out to the fishermen in good Chinese. Great was the alarm of the men on finding themselves accosted by what they supposed to be "talking seals." Their first impulse was to set sail and make off, but Kin-Fo at last convinced them that he was a Chinaman like themselves, and he and the two Americans were taken on board.

Soun was then turned the right way up by means of a boat-hook, and one of the fishermen caught hold of his pigtail for the purpose of hauling him on to the boat. The pigtail came off bodily in the man's hand, and down went Soun again into the water. The fishermen, by throwing a rope round his waist, succeeded, with considerable difficulty, in getting him into the boat.

Almost before he could get rid of the quantities of salt water that he had swallowed, Kin-Fo walked up to him, and said:

"Then that pigtail of yours was false, after all?"

"Ah, yes, sir," replied Soun, "knowing your ways, I should never have ventured to enter your service with a real one."

The tone in which he spoke was so irresistibly comical, that Kin-Fo burst into a fit of laughter, in which the others joined.

The fishermen were from Foo-Ning, and were now only about five miles from the very port to which Kin-Fo wanted to go.

Toward eight o'clock that evening, they were safely landed at Foo-Ning, and divesting themselves of their Boyton apparatus, once more resumed their ordinary appearance.

CHAPTER XX

RESIGNATION OF OFFICE

"Now for the Tai-ping!" were Kin-Fo's first words on the following morning, after he and his fellow-adventurers had passed a night of well-earned repose. They were now upon Lao-Shen's field of action; it was the 30th of June; matters were at a crisis. Would Kin-Fo come out conqueror in the strife? Would he have the chance of negotiating for the restoration of his letter, before Wang's ruthless agent should deal the fatal stab into his bosom?

The Americans interchanged significant glances, and re-echoed his words, "Now for the Tai-ping!"

The arrival of the party on the previous evening in their singular costume had caused a great commotion in the little port of Foo-Ning. The objects of public curiosity, they had been followed by a crowd to the door of the inn, where the money that Craig and Fry had taken the precaution to put in their bag, procured them clothes adapted for the present circumstances. Had they not been numerously surrounded, they could hardly have failed to notice one Celestial in particular, who never left their track. Their surprise would have been considerable had they known that he was at watch all night at the inn-door, and that in the morning he was still to be found on the same spot.

Consequently there were no suspicions in their mind, when the man accosted them as they left the inn, and offered his services as a guide. He was about thirty years of age, with nothing in his appearance to indicate that he was otherwise than honest. Craig and Fry, however, cautious to the last, inquired whither he wished to guide them.

"To the Great Wall, of course," said he. "All visitors to Foo-Ning go to see the Great Wall, and as I know the country well, I thought you might accept my services to show you the way."

Kin-Fo interposed to inquire whether the country was safe for traveling. The guide assured him that it was perfectly secure.

"Do you know anything of a certain Lao-Shen hereabouts?" inquired Kin-Fo.

"O yes, Lao-Shen the Tai-ping," replied the guide, "but there is nothing to fear from him this side of the Wall; he will not venture to set foot on Imperial territory; he and his crew are only seen in the Mongolian Provinces."

"Where was he seen last?" asked Kin-Fo.

"In the neighborhood of the Tchin-Tang-Ho, only a few lis from the Wall."

"And how far is it from Foo-Ning to the Tchin-Tang-Ho?"

"About fifty lis."

"Very well; I engage you to conduct me to Lao-Shen's camp."

The man started.

"You shall be well paid," Kin-Fo added.

But the guide shook his head; he evidently did not care to pass the frontier.

"To the Great Wall," he said, "no farther. It would be at the risk of my life to go beyond."

Kin-Fo offered to pay him any sum that he pleased to demand, till at last he wrung from the man a reluctant consent to undertake the business.

Turning to the Americans, Kin-Fo told them that of course they were free to go or not, as they liked.

"Wherever you go," said Craig.

"We go also," said Fry.

The client of the Centenarian had not yet ceased to be of the value of 200,000 dollars.

The agents appeared to be perfectly well satisfied as to the trustworthiness of their guide, and to have no apprehension of the danger which was likely to threaten beyond the great barrier that the Chinese have erected to defend themselves from the incursions of the Mongolian hordes. Soun was not consulted as to whether he wished to accompany the party or not; go he must.

Five camels accordingly were purchased, together with the small quantity of harness necessary for their equipment. A stock of provisions and a supply of weapons were also procured, and the party started under the direction of their guide.

The preparations had consumed so much time, that it was one o'clock in the afternoon before they were fairly on their road. The guide, however, made sure of reaching the Great Wall by midnight, where they would make a temporary camp, and if Kin-Fo still persisted in his determination, they would cross the frontier on the morrow.

The country about Foo-Ning was undulated, and the road, upon which the yellow dust rose in clouds, wound through richly cultivated fields, a sign that the travelers had not yet quitted the productive territory of the Chinese Empire.

The camels marched with a slow, measured tread, each carrying its rider comfortably ensconced between its two great humps. Soun greatly approved of this mode of traveling, and thought that in this way he should not object to journey even to the world's end. The heat, however, was

very great, the hot air being refracted from the soil and producing strange mirages, like vast seas, which vanished almost as suddenly as they appeared, much to the satisfaction of Soun, to whom the prospect of another sea voyage opened visions of unmitigated horror.

No conversation was possible under the circumstances. The guide, who seemed to be of a taciturn nature, always took the foremost place, and although the dense masses of dust materially narrowed his range of vision, he never hesitated which way to follow, even at crossroads, where there was no sign-post. Craig and Fry, quite satisfied as to his honesty, were free to direct all their attention to Kin-Fo. Naturally, as the time grew shorter, their anxiety increased; now or never was the time to bring them face to face with the foe they dreaded.

Kin-Fo meanwhile was forgetting all the anxieties of the present and future in making a retrospect of the past. The unintermitted evil fortune of the last two months made him feel seriously depressed. From the day that his correspondent at San Francisco sent him the news of the loss of all his fortune, had he not passed through a period of ill-luck that was truly extraordinary? What a contrast between his existence of late, and the time when he possessed advantages which he had not the sense to appreciate! Would misfortune terminate with his regaining possession of the letter? Should he at last have the tender care of the sweet Le-ou to compensate him for his troubles, and make him forget the difficulties by which he had been beset? His thoughts bewildered him, and Wang, the philosopher and friend of his youth, was no longer present to comfort and advise him.

His reverie was suddenly interrupted by his camel coming so sharply in contact with that of the guide, that he was nearly thrown to the ground.

"What are you stopping for?" he asked.

"It is eight o'clock, sir," said the conductor, "and I propose that we halt and have our supper; we can continue our journey afterward."

"But it will be dark, will it not?" objected Kin-Fo.

"There is no fear that I shall lose my way; the Great Wall is not more than twenty lis ahead, and we had better give our animals some rest."

Kin-Fo assented to the proposal, and the whole party came to a halt. There was a small deserted hut by the side of the road, and a little stream where the camels might be watered. It was not dark, and Kin-Fo and his companions could see to spread their meal, which they afterward ate with an excellent appetite.

Conversation did not flow rapidly. Two or three times Kin-Fo tried to get some information about Lao-Shen, but the guide generally shook his head, evidently desiring to avoid the subject. He merely repeated that Lao-Shen himself never came on this side of the Great Wall, although he added that some of his band occasionally made their appearance.

"Buddha protect us from the Tai-ping," he concluded.

While the guide was speaking, Craig and Fry were knitting their brows, looking at their watches, and holding a whispered consultation. "Why should we not wait here quietly until to-morrow morning?" they asked presently aloud.

"In this hut!" exclaimed the guide. "Far better to be in the open country; we shall run much less risk of being surprised."

"It was arranged that we were to be at the Great Wall to-night," said Kin-Fo, "and at the Great Wall I mean to be."

His tone was such as to brook no contradiction, and the Americans could not do otherwise than submit. Soun, though half paralyzed with fear, dared not protest.

It was now nearly nine o'clock; the meal was over, and the guide gave the signal to start. Kin-Fo prepared to mount his camel; Craig and Fry followed him. "Are you quite determined, sir, to put yourself into Lao-Shen's hands?"

"Quite determined," said Kin-Fo; "I will have my letter at any price."

"You are running a great risk," they pleaded, "in going to the Tai-ping's camp."

"I have come too far to retreat now," said Kin-Fo, with decision; "as I told you before, you may do as you please about following me."

The guide meantime had lighted a small pocket lantern. The Americans drew near, and again looked at their

watches. "It would be much more prudent to wait till to-morrow," they again persisted.

"Nonsense!" said Kin-Fo. "Lao-Shen will be just as dangerous to-morrow or the day after as he is to-day. My decision is unalterable. Let us be off at once."

The guide had overheard the latter part of the conversation. Once or twice previously, when Craig and Fry had been trying to dissuade Kin-Fo from proceeding, an expression of dissatisfaction had passed over his countenance, and now, when he found them persisting in their remonstrance, he could not restrain a gesture of annoyance.

The motion did not escape Kin-Fo, and he was still further surprised when the guide, as he was assisting him to mount his camel, whispered in his ear, "Beware of those two men."

Kin-Fo was on the point of asking him to explain himself, but the man put his finger on his lips, gave the signal for starting, and the little caravan set off on its night journey across the country.

The guide's mysterious speech had aroused an uneasy suspicion in Kin-Fo's mind; and yet he could not believe that, after two months' devoted attention, his two protectors were about to play him false. Yet why had they tried to dissuade him from paying his visit to the Tai-ping's camp? Was it not for that very purpose that they had left Pekin? Was it not to their interest that Kin-Fo should regain possession of the letter that compromised his life? Truly their conduct was inexplicable.

Kin-Fo kept to himself all the perplexity which was agitating his mind. He had taken up his position behind the guide; Craig and Fry followed him closely, and for a couple of hours the journey was continued in silence.

It was close upon midnight when the guide stopped and pointed to a long black line in the north that stood out clearly against the lighter background of the sky. Behind the line several hill-tops had already caught the moonlight, although the moon herself was still below the horizon.

"The Great Wall!" he said.

"Shall we get beyond it to-night?" inquired Kin-Fo.

"Certainly, if you wish it."

"By all means, yes!"

"I must first go and examine the passage," said the

guide. "Wait here till I come back." The camels were brought to a standstill, and the guide disappeared.

Craig and Fry stepped up to Kin-Fo. "Have you been satisfied with our services, sir, since we have been commissioned to attend you?" they inquired in a breath.

"Quite satisfied."

"Then will you be kind enough to sign this paper as a testimonial to our good conduct during the time you have been under our charge?"

Kin-Fo looked with some surprise at the leaf torn from a notebook that Craig was holding out to him.

"It is a certificate which we hope to have the pleasure of exhibiting to our principal," added Fry.

"Here is my back to serve you as a desk," said Craig, suiting the action to the word, and stooping down.

"And here is a pen and ink with which to sign your name," added Fry.

Kin-Fo smiled, and did as he was requested. "But what is the meaning of all this ceremony at this time of night?" he asked.

"Because in a very few minutes your interest in the Centenarian Assurance Office will have expired," said Craig.

"And you may kill yourself, or allow yourself to be killed, just which you please," said Fry.

Kin-Fo stared with astonishment; the Americans were talking in the blandest of tones; but he did not at all comprehend their meaning. Presently the moon began to rise above the eastern horizon.

"There's the moon!" exclaimed Fry.

"To-day, the 30th of June, she rises at midnight" said Craig.

"Your policy has not been renewed," said Fry.

"Therefore you are no longer the client of the Centenarian," added Craig.

"Good-night, sir," said Fry politely.

"Good-night," echoed Craig, with equal courtesy.

And the two agents, turning their camels' heads in the opposite direction, disappeared from view, leaving Kin-Fo in speechless amazement.

The sound of their camels' hoofs had scarcely died away, when a troop of men, led on by the guide, seized upon

Kin-Fo, helpless to defend himself, and captured Soun, who was rushing away in the hope of making his escape.

An instant afterward, both master and man were dragged into the low chamber of one of the deserted bastions of the Great Wall, the door of which was at once fastened behind them.

CHAPTER XXI

BACK TO SHANG-HAI

The Great Wall of China, constructed by the Emperor Tin-Chi-Hooang-Ti in the third century, is nearly 1,400 miles long and extends from its two jetties in the Gulf of Leao-Tong to the province of Kan-Sou, where it degenerates into very insignificant dimensions. It is an uninterrupted succession of double ramparts, defended by bastions fifty feet high and twenty wide; the lower part is of granite, the upper of bricks, and it boldly follows the outline of the mountain tops on the Russo-Chinese frontier. On the Chinese side the wall is now in a very bad condition, but on the side facing Manchuria it is still well preserved, and its battlements maintained in formidable array.

Neither army nor artillery defends this line of fortification; Russian, Tartar, Kirghis, as much as the Chinaman, is free to pass its barrier; and the wall, moreover, fails to protect the Empire from the visitation of the fine Mongolian dust which the north wind brings down sometimes as far as the capital.

After passing a miserable night on a heap of straw, Kin-Fo and Soun were next morning forced to take their way beneath the postern of these deserted bastions. They were escorted by a band of twelve men, who no doubt were in Lao-Shen's service. The guide who had hitherto conducted them had disappeared; it became more and more plain that it had been design and not chance that had thrown him in their way; the rascal's hesitation about venturing beyond the Great Wall was a mere *ruse* to avert suspicion; and he too beyond a question had been acting under the orders of the Tai-ping.

"Of course you are taking me to Lao-Shen's camp?" Kin-Fo said to the leader of the escort.

"We shall be there in little more than an hour," answered the man.

It was a confirmation to Kin-Fo's conjecture, of which he did not stand in much need; yet it satisfied him. After all, was he not being conducted to the very place for which he had set out? and was he not in the way to get the chance of recovering the paper that kept his life in jeopardy? He maintained his composure perfectly, leaving all outward exhibition of alarm to poor Soun, whose teeth were chattering with the most abject fear.

Beyond the wall, the troop did not continue its journey along the great Mongol road, but diverged at once into a steep pathway to the right through the mountainous district of the province, the guard so carefully surrounding their prisoners that any attempt to escape, even had they been inclined to venture it, would have been out of the question.

Their advance was as rapid as the steepness of the road would allow, and in about an hour and a half, on turning the corner of a projecting eminence, they came in sight of a building in a half-ruined condition; it was an old bonze-house built upon the brow of a hill, and a curious monument of Buddhist architecture. It did not seem at all likely that any worshipers would now be found to frequent a temple in such a deserted part of the frontier; but it was a situation not badly suited for a highwayman, and if Lao-Shen had settled there, he had made a judicious selection for himself.

In reply to a question of Kin-Fo, the leader of the escort told him that it was Lao-Shen's residence.

"Take me to him at once," said Kin-Fo.

"We have brought you on purpose," answered the man.

Having been deprived of their fire-arms, Kin-Fo and Soun were brought into a wide vestibule that had formed the atrium of the ancient temple. Here were about twenty fierce-looking men, all armed and attired in the picturesque costume of highwaymen. With the utmost calmness, Kin-Fo passed through the double row they formed on his entrance; Soun having to be pushed forcibly by his shoulders.

The farther end of the vestibule opened on to a staircase cut in the solid wall, and leading into the heart of the moun-

tain to a crypt beneath the temple by windings so complicated that no one unaccustomed to the place could have found his way.

Lighted by torches carried by the escort, the prisoners were conducted down thirty steps, then for about a hundred yards along a narrow passage, until they found themselves in a large hall, which the additional glare of more torches still left very dim. Massive pillars carved with grotesque heads of the monsters of Chinese mythology supported the low arches of the roof, which sprang from their keystones with spreading moldings.

A low murmur that ran through the hall made Kin-Fo aware that it was not deserted; so far from that, its recesses were filled with men, as if the entire confraternity of Tai-pings had been summoned to some special ceremony.

At the extreme end of the crypt, on a wide stone platform, stood a man of enormous stature; he bore all the appearance of a president of some secret tribunal; three or four attendants stood close beside him, as if acting the part of his assessors, and at a sign from him they gave orders that the prisoners were to approach.

"Here is Lao-Shen," said the leader, pointing to the gigantic figure on the platform.

Stepping forward with firm step, Kin-Fo in the most direct manner entered upon the business that was uppermost in his mind.

"I am Kin-Fo," he began. "Wang has been your old comrade and confederate. I gave Wang a certain paper with a certain contract. Wang has transferred that paper to you. I come to tell you that that contract is not valid now, and I demand the paper at your hands."

The Tai-ping did not stir a muscle; had he been of bronze he could not have been more rigid.

"You can demand your own price," continued Kin-Fo, and then waited for an answer.

But no answer came.

Kin-Fo went on:

"I am ready to give you a draft on any bank you choose. I am prepared to guarantee its payment to any messenger you send. Name the sum for which you surrender the contract."

Still no answer.

Kin-Fo repeated his request more emphatically than before.

No answer.

"Five thousand taels, shall I offer?"

Still silence.

"Ten thousand?"

Lao-Shen and all around him were as mute as the statues.

Kin-Fo grew anxious and impatient.

"Do you not hear me?"

Lao-Shen bowed his head gravely.

"I will give you thirty thousand taels. I will give you all you would get from the Centenarian. I must have the paper. Name, only name the price."

The Tai-ping stood mute as before.

Wild with excitement Kin-Fo clenched his hands and dashed forward to the platform.

"What price will you take?"

"Money will not buy that paper," at last said the Tai-ping sternly; "you have offended Buddha by despising the life that Buddha gave you, and Buddha will be avenged. Death alone can convince you of the worth of the gift of life which you have esteemed so lightly."

The voice with which this sentence of decision was uttered prohibited any reply; and even had Kin-Fo been anxious to say a word in his own defense, the opportunity was not afforded him. A signal was given, and he was forthwith seized, carried out, and thrust into a cage, the door of which was immediately locked. In spite of the most pitiable howlings, Soun was subjected to the same treatment.

"Ah, well!" said Kin-Fo to himself, when he was left to his solitude, "I suppose those who despise life deserve to die!"

Yet death was not so near as he imagined. Hours passed on and execution was delayed; he began to speculate what terrible torture the Tai-ping might have in store for him. After a while he was conscious that his cage was being moved, and he felt that it was being placed upon some vehicle. Evidently he was to be conveyed to a distance. For nearly eight hours there was the tramp of horses, and the clatter of weapons carried by an escort, and he was tumbled and jolted about most unmercifully. Then came

a halt. Shortly afterward the cage was removed to another conveyance; it was not long before it began rolling and pitching; there was the noise, too, of a screw, and the ill-fated tenant was aware that he was on board a steamer.

"Are they going to throw me overboard?" he wondered; "well, it will be a mercy if they spare me any worse torture!"

Forty-eight hours elapsed. Twice a day a little food was introduced into the cage by a trap-door, but he never could see the hand that brought it, and never could get a reply to the question that he asked.

He had plenty of time to think now. He had been years and years and felt no emotion; surely he was not destined to die without emotion; he had had enough and more than enough during the last few weeks; he must die now, but he had the intensest longing to die in the light of day; he shuddered at the prospect of being cast unawares into the deep sea; oh, that he could live, if it were only to see once more his beloved Le-ou! To see her no more; the thought was terrible!

The voyage came to an end; he was yet alive; but surely his last moments must have come; here was the crisis; every minute was a year,—a hundred years!

To his unbounded surprise, he felt his cage carried along and deposited upon *terra firma;* he heard a commotion outside, and in a few minutes the door was opened; he was seized, and a bandage fastened tightly over his eyes, and he was pushed violently along. Finding after a time that the steps of the men who were driving him along began to hesitate, he concluded that they had arrived at the scene of his execution, and shouted out,—

"Hear my last petition. I have but one request; unbandage my eyes; let me see the daylight; let me die as a man that can face death!"

"Grant the criminal the boon he asks," said a solemn voice, severely, in his ears; "let the bandage be untied."

The bandage was removed.

Kin-Fo quivered with amazement. Was he dreaming? What was the meaning of all this?

Before him was a table sumptuously spread. Five guests were smiling, as if they were expecting his arrival. Two seats were still unoccupied.

"Friends, friends!" he cried in the bewilderment of his excitement; "tell me, am I mad?"

A few moments restored him to composure, and he looked around; there was no mistake; before his eyes were Wang and the four friends of his early youth, Yin-Pang, Hooal, Pao-Shen, and Tim, with whom just two months previously he had feasted in the cabin of the yacht on the Pearl River at Canton. Here he was in the dining-room of his own yamen at Shang-Hai.

"Speak, Wang, and tell me," he cried, "what means all this? Is it you or your ghost?"

"It is Wang himself," replied the philosopher smiling.

Kin-Fo looked puzzled. Wang then went on, "You have come home again after a rough lesson. You owe that lesson to me. It has been my doing that you have had so much to bear. But it has been for your good, and you must forgive me."

More perplexed than ever, Kin-Fo looked at him, but said nothing.

"All," proceeded Wang, "is soon explained. I undertook, at your solicitation, the task of putting you to death, just in order that the commission should not be given to other hands. I knew sooner than even you did, that the report about your ruin and the loss of your property was all false; and I knew, in consequence, that though you then wanted to die, you would very soon want to live. I have made my former comrade, Lao-Shen, my confidant. Lao-Shen is now one of the most faithful of the friends of the government; he has long since submitted to established rule; but in this affair he has coöperated with me; and your own experience of the last few days tells you how; he has brought you face to face with death, and thus has taught you the lesson I determined you should learn of the value of life. My heart bled for you at the trouble and the suffering you had to endure; it was a hard and bitter thing to me to abandon you to what you would have to undergo; but I knew there was no other, no easier way in which you could be made successful in the pursuit of happiness."

Wang could say no more. Kin-Fo had caught him in his arms, and was pressing him to his heart.

"Poor Wang!" he said, "what pain you have suffered on

my account! And besides, what risks you have run! I shall never forget that day at the Bridge of Palikao."

The philosopher laughed, almost merrily.

"Yes; it was a cold bath for any one; but for a man of fifty-five, in a burning sweat after a long chase, it was rather a trial both for his years and for his philosophy. But never mind, no harm came of it. A man never moves so quickly as when he is doing good for others."

"For others," repeated Kin-Fo; "yes, I do not doubt it; the true secret of happiness is to be working for the good of others."

The conversation, which was becoming grave, was interrupted by the introduction of Soun. The poor fellow was looking as miserable as might be expected after a sea-voyage of nearly two days; it would be difficult to describe exactly the hue of his complexion, but he expressed himself unboundedly glad to find himself in his master's home again.

After releasing Wang from his embrace, Kin-Fo went round and affectionately shook hands with each one of the guests.

"What a fool I have been all my life!" he said.

"But you are going to be a perfect sage henceforth," replied Wang.

"My first act of wisdom, then," Kin-Fo began, "must be to set my affairs in order. I shall not be content until I have that little document again in my possession which has been the cause of all my tribulations. If Lao-Shen is in possession of it, he must give it up, in case it should fall into unscrupulous hands."

There was a general smile.

"Our friend's adventures," said Wang, "have most undoubtedly wrought a change in his character; he is no longer the indifferent mortal he was."

"But you do not tell me," persisted Kin-Fo, "where that written contract is; nothing can satisfy me till I have seen it burnt, and its ashes scattered to the winds."

"You seem in earnest," said Wang.

"Most seriously," replied Kin-Fo; "but where is the paper? Has Lao-Shen given it back?"

"Lao-Shen never had it."

"Then you have it yourself; you will not refuse to re-

store it to me? I suppose you do not want to retain it as a guarantee against a repetition of my folly."

"Certainly not," said Wang; "but it is not in my possession; still more, it is not at my disposal."

"What!" cried Kin-Fo; "you do not mean that you have been imprudent enough to intrust it to other hands?"

"I confess I have parted with it," Wang replied.

"How? why? when? to whom?" exclaimed Kin-Fo in his impatience.

"I gave it up—" continued Wang calmly.

"To whom? tell me," interrupted Kin-Fo.

"You do not give me time to tell you; I gave it up to one who is willing to restore it to you?"

And almost before he had finished speaking, Le-ou stood in front of him, holding the paper in her delicate fingers. Concealed behind a curtain, she had heard all that passed, and delayed no longer to come forward.

"Le-ou!" cried Kin-Fo, and was hastening to clasp her to his bosom.

But she drew back, as if she were going to retreat as mysteriously as she had appeared.

"Patience, patience!" she said, "business before pleasure; does my brother know and acknowledge his own handwriting?"

"Too well," he answered; "there is not the second fool in the world who ever would have written it."

"Is that your real opinion?" she asked.

"My real opinion," said Kin-Fo.

"Then you may burn the paper," said Le-ou; "and therewith annihilate the man who wrote it."

With the most beaming of smiles she handed him the paper which so long had been the torture of his life; he held it to a candle, not removing his eyes from it until it was consumed.

Then turning to his promised bride, he pressed her lovingly to his bosom.

"And now," he said, "you will come and preside at our reunion here. I feel as if I can do justice to the feast."

"And so do we," rejoined the guests.

A few days later and the term of the court-mourning had expired. With even greater lavishness than before the

ceremony was arranged, and the marriage took place immediately.

The affection of the loving couple was unalterable; prosperity awaited them throughout their future life; and only by a visit to the yamen in Shang-Hai could the measure of their mutual happiness be realized.

THE END

The Giant Raft

BOOK ONE

Eight Hundred Leagues on the Amazon

Eight Hundred Leagues on the Amazon

CHAPTER I

A CAPTAIN OF THE WOODS

"P h y j s l y d d q f d z x g a s g z z q q e h x g k f n d r x u j u g i o c y t d x v k s b x h h u y p o h d v y r y m h u h p u y d k j o x p h e t o z s l e t n p m v ff o v p d p a j x h y n o j y g g a y m e q y n f u q l n m v l y f g s u z m q i z t l b q g y u g s q e u b v n r c r e d g r u z b l r m x y u h q h p z d r r g c r o h e p q x u f i v v r p l p h o n t h v d d q f h q s n t z h h h n f e p m q k y u u e x k t o g z g k y u u m f v i j d q d p z j q s y k r p l x h x q r y m v k l o h h h o t o z v d k s p p s u v j h d."

THE man who held in his hand the document of which this strange assemblage of letters formed the concluding paragraph, remained some moments lost in thought.

It contained about a hundred of these lines, with the letters at even distances, and undivided into words. It seemed to have been written many years before, and time had already laid his tawny finger on the sheet of stout paper which was covered with the hieroglyphics.

On what principle had these letters been arranged? He who held the paper was alone able to tell. With such cipher languages it is as with the locks of some of our iron safes—in either case the protection is the same. The combinations which they lead to can be counted by millions, and no calculator's life would suffice to express them. Some particular "word" has to be known before the lock of the safe will act, and some "cipher" is necessary before the cryptogram can be read.

He who had just reperused the document was but a simple "captain of the woods." Under this name of *Capi-*

taes do Mato are known in Brazil those individuals who are engaged in the recapture of fugitive slaves. The institution dates from 1732. At that period anti-slavery ideas had entered the minds of but a few philanthropists, and more than a century had to elapse before the mass of the people grasped and applied them. That freedom was a right, that the very first of the natural rights of man was to be free and to belong only to himself, would seem to be self-evident, and yet thousands of years had to pass before the glorious thought was generally accepted, and the nations of the earth had the courage to proclaim it.

In 1852, the year in which our story opens, there were still slaves in Brazil, and as a natural consequence, captains of the woods to pursue them. For certain reasons of political economy the hour of general emancipation had been delayed, but the black at this date had the right to ransom himself, the children which were born to him were born free. The day was not far distant when the magnificent country, into which could be put three-quarters of the continent of Europe, would no longer count a single slave among its ten millions of inhabitants.

The occupation of the captains of the woods was doomed, and at the period we speak of the advantages obtainable from the capture of fugitives were rapidly diminishing. While, however, the calling continued sufficiently profitable, the captains of the woods formed a peculiar class of adventurers, principally composed of freedmen and deserters —of not very enviable reputation. The slave-hunters, in fact, belonged to the dregs of society, and we shall not be far wrong in assuming that the man with the cryptogram was a fitting comrade for his fellow *capitaes do mato*. Torres—for that was his name—unlike the majority of his companions, was neither half-breed, Indian, nor negro. He was a white of Brazilian origin, and had received a better education than befitted his present condition. One of those unclassed men who are found so frequently in the distant countries of the New World, at a time when the Brazilian law still excluded mulattoes and others of mixed blood from certain employments, it was evident that if such exclusion had affected him, it had done so on account of his worthless character, and not because of his birth.

Torres at the present moment was not, however, in Brazil.

He had just passed the frontier, and was wandering in the forests of Peru, from which issue the waters of the Upper Amazon.

He was a man of about thirty years of age, on whom the fatigues of a precarious existence seemed, thanks to an exceptional temperament and an iron constitution, to have had no effect. Of middle height, broad shoulders, regular features, and decided gait, his face was tanned with the scorching air of the tropics. He had a thick black beard, and eyes lost under contracting eyebrows, giving that swift but hard glance so characteristic of insolent natures. Clothed as back-woodsmen are generally clothed, not over elaborately, his garments bore witness to long and roughish wear. On his head, stuck jauntily on one side, was a leather hat with a large brim. Trousers he had of coarse wool, which were tucked into the tops of the thick, heavy boots which formed the most substantial part of his attire, and over all, and hiding all, was a faded yellowish " poncho."

But if Torres was a captain of the woods it was evident that he was not now employed in that capacity, his means of attack and defense being obviously insufficient for any one engaged in the pursuit of the blacks. No fire-arms—neither gun nor revolver. In his belt only one of those weapons, more sword than hunting-knife, called a *manchetta,* and in addition he had an *enchada,* which is a sort of hoe, specially employed in the pursuit of the tatous and agoutis, which abound in the forests of the Upper Amazon, where there is generally little to fear from wild beasts.

On the 4th of May, 1852, it happened, then, that our adventurer was deeply absorbed in the reading of the document on which his eyes were fixed, and, accustomed as he was to live in the forests of South America, he was perfectly indifferent to their splendors. Nothing could distract his attention; neither the constant cry of the howling monkeys, which St. Hilaire has graphically compared to the ax of the woodman as he strikes the branches of the trees, nor the sharp jingle of the rings of the rattlesnake (not an aggressive reptile, it is true, but one of the most venomous); neither the bawling voice of the horned toad, the most hideous of its kind, nor even the solemn and sonorous croak of the bellowing frog, which, though it cannot equal the bull in size, can surpass him in noise.

Torres heard nothing of all these sounds, which form, as it were, the complex voice of the forests of the New World. Reclining at the foot of a magnificent tree, he did not even admire the lofty boughs of that *pao ferro,* or iron wood, with its somber bark, hard as the metal which it replaces in the weapon and utensil of the Indian savage. No; lost in thought, the captain of the woods turned the curious paper again and again between his fingers. With the cipher, of which he had the secret, he assigned to each letter its true value. He read, he verified the sense of those lines, unintelligible to all but him, and then he smiled—and a most unpleasant smile it was.

Then he murmured some phrases in an undertone which none in the solitude of the Peruvian forests could hear, and which no one, had he been anywhere else, would have heard.

"Yes," said he, at length, "here are a hundred lines very neatly written, which, for some one that I know, have an importance that is undoubted. That somebody is rich. It is a question of life or death for him, and looked at in every way it will cost him something." And, scrutinizing the paper with greedy eyes, "At a conto only for each word of this last sentence it will amount to a considerable sum, and it is this sentence which fixes the price. It sums up the entire document. It gives their true names to true personages; but before trying to understand it I ought to begin by counting the number of words it contains, and even when this is done its true meaning may be missed."

In saying this Torres began to count mentally.

"There are fifty-eight words, and that makes fifty-eight contos. With nothing but that one could live in Brazil, in America, wherever one wished, and even live without doing anything! And what would it be, then, if all the words of this document were paid for at the same price? It would be necessary to count by hundreds of contos. Ah! there is quite a fortune here for me to realize if I am not the greatest of duffers."

It seemed as though the hands of Torres felt the enormous sum, and were already closing over the rolls of gold. Suddenly his thoughts took another turn.

"At length," he cried, "I see land; and I do not regret the voyage which has led me from the coast of the Atlantic

to the Upper Amazon. But this man may quit America and go beyond the seas, and then how can I touch him? But no! he is there, and if I climb to the top of this tree I can see the roof under which he lives with his family!" Then seizing the paper and shaking it with terrible meaning, "Before to-morrow I will be in his presence; before to-morrow he will know that his honor and his life are contained in these lines. And when he wishes to see the cipher which permits him to read them, he—well, he will pay for it. He will pay, if I wish it, with all his fortune, as he ought to pay with all his blood! Ah! My worthy comrade, who gave me this cipher, who told me where I could find his old colleague, and the name under which he has been hiding himself for so many years, hardly suspects that he has made my fortune!"

For the last time Torres glanced over the yellow paper, and then, after carefully folding it, put it away into a little copper box which he used for a purse. This box was about as big as a cigar-case, and if what was in it was all Torres possessed he would nowhere have been considered a wealthy man. He had a few of all the coins of the neighboring States—ten double-condors in gold of the United States of Columbia, worth about a hundred francs; Brazilian reis worth about as much; golden sols of Peru, worth, say, double; some Chilian escudos, worth fifty francs or more, and some smaller coins; but the lot would not amount to more than a hundred dollars, and Torres would have been somewhat embarrassed had he been asked how or where he had got them. One thing was certain, that for some months, after having suddenly abandoned the trade of the slave-hunter, which he carried on in the province of Para, Torres had ascended the basin of the Amazon, crossed the Brazilian frontier, and come into Peruvian territory. To such a man the necessaries of life were but few; expenses he had none —nothing for his lodging, nothing for his clothes. The forest provided his food, which in the backwoods cost him nought. A few reis were enough for his tobacco, which he bought at the mission-stations or in the villages, and for a trifle he filled his flask with liquor. With little he could go far.

When he had pushed the paper into the metal box, of which the lid shut tightly with a snap, Torres, instead of

putting it into the pocket of his under-vest, thought to be extra careful, and placed it near him in a hollow of a root of the tree beneath which he was sitting. This proceeding, as it turned out, might have cost him dear.

It was very warm; the air was oppressive. If the church of the nearest village had possessed a clock, the clock would have struck two, and, coming with the wind, Torres would have heard it, for it was not more than a couple of miles off. But he cared not as to time. Accustomed to regulate his proceedings by the height of the sun, calculated with more or less accuracy, he could scarcely be supposed to conduct himself with military precision. He breakfasted or dined when he pleased or when he could; he slept when and where sleep overtook him. If his table was not always spread, his bed was always ready at the foot of some tree in the open forest. And in other respects Torres was not difficult to please. He had traveled during most of the morning, and having already eaten a little, he began to feel the want of a snooze. Two or three hours' rest would, he thought, put him in a state to continue his road, and so he laid himself down on the grass as comfortably as he could, and waited for sleep beneath the ironwood-tree.

Torres was not one of those people who drop off to sleep without certain preliminaries. He was in the habit of drinking a drop or two of strong liquor, and of then smoking a pipe; the spirits, he said, overexcited the brain, and the tobacco-smoke agreeably mingled with the general haziness of his revery.

Torres commenced, then, by applying to his lips a flask which he carried at his side; it contained the liquor generally known under the name of *chica* in Peru, and more particularly under that of *caysuma* in the Upper Amazon, to which fermented distillation of the root of the sweet manioc the captain had added a good dose of *tafia,* or native rum.

When Torres had drank a little of this mixture, he shook the flask, and discovered, not without regret, that it was nearly empty.

"Must get some more," he said, very quietly.

Then taking out a short, wooden pipe, he filled it with the coarse and bitter tobacco of Brazil, of which the leaves belong to that old *petun* introduced into France by Nicot,

to whom we owe the popularization of the most productive and wide-spread of the solanaceæ.

This native tobacco had little in common with the fine qualities of our present manufacturers; but Torres was not more difficult to please in this matter than in others; and so, having filled his pipe, he struck a match and applied the flame to a piece of that sticky substance which is the secretion of certain of the hymenoptera, and is known as *ants' amadou*. With the amadou he lighted up, and after about a dozen whiffs his eyes closed, his pipe escaped from his fingers, and he fell asleep.

CHAPTER II

ROBBER AND ROBBED

Torres slept for about half an hour, and then there was a noise among the trees—a sound of light footsteps, as though some visitor was walking with naked feet, and taking all the precaution he could lest he should be heard. To have put himself on guard against any suspicious approach would have been the first care of our adventurer had his eyes been open at the time. But he had not then awoke, and what advanced was able to arrive in his presence, at ten paces from the tree, without being perceived.

It was not a man at all, it was a *guariba*.

Of all the prehensile-tailed monkeys which haunt the forests of the Upper Amazon the guariba is without doubt the most eccentric. Of sociable disposition, and not very savage, differing therein very greatly from the mucura, who is as ferocious as he is foul, he delights in company, and generally travels in troops. It was he whose presence had been signalled from afar by the monotonous concert of voices, so like the psalm-singing of some church choir. But if nature has not made him vicious, it is none the less necessary to attack him with caution, and under any circumstances a sleeping traveler ought not to leave himself exposed, lest a guariba should surprise him when he is not in a position to defend himself.

This monkey, which is also known in Brazil as the *barbado*, was of large size. The suppleness and stoutness of his limbs proclaimed him a powerful creature, as fit to

fight on the ground as to leap from branch to branch at the tops of the giants of the forest.

He advanced then cautiously, and with short steps. He advanced to the right and to the left, and rapidly swung his tail. To these representatives of the monkey tribe nature has not been contented to give four hands, she has shown herself more generous, and added a fifth, for the extremity of their caudal appendage possesses a perfect power of prehension.

The guariba noiselessly approached, brandishing a sturdy cudgel, which, wielded by his muscular arm, would have proved a formidable weapon. For some minutes he had seen the man at the foot of the tree, but the sleeper did not move, and this doubtless induced him to come and look at him a little nearer. He came forward then not without hesitation, and stopped at last about three paces off.

On his bearded face was pictured a grin, which showed his sharp-edged teeth, white as ivory, and the cudgel began to move about in a way that was not very reassuring for the captain of the woods.

Unmistakably the sight of Torres did not inspire the guariba with friendly thoughts. Had he then particular reasons for wishing evil to this defenseless specimen of the human race which chance had delivered over to him? Perhaps! We know how certain animals retain the memory of the bad treatment they have received, and it is possible that against backwoodsmen in general he bore some special grudge.

After looking at the man for some minutes the guariba began to move around the tree. He stepped slowly, holding his breath, and getting nearer and nearer. His attitude was threatening, his countenance ferocious. Nothing could have seemed easier to him than to have crushed this motionless man at a single blow, and assuredly at that moment the life of Torres hung by a thread.

In truth the guariba stopped a second time close up to the tree, placed himself at the side, so as to command the head of the sleeper, and lifted his stick to give the blow.

But if Torres had been imprudent in putting near him in the crevice of the root the little case which contained his document and his fortune, it was this imprudence which saved his life.

A sunbeam shooting between the branches just glinted on the case, the polished metal of which lighted up like a looking-glass. The monkey, with the frivolity peculiar to his species, instantly had his attention distracted. His ideas, if such an animal could have ideas, took another direction. He stopped, caught hold of the case, jumped back a pace or two, and, raising it to the level of his eyes, looked at it not without surprise as he moved it about and used it like a mirror. He was if anything still more astonished when he heard the rattle of the gold pieces it contained. The music enchanted him. It was like a rattle in the hands of a child. He carried it to his mouth, and his teeth grated against the metal, but made no impression on it.

Doubtless the guariba thought he had found some fruit of a new kind, a sort of huge almond brilliant all over, and with a kernel playing freely in its shell. But if he soon discovered his mistake he did not consider it a reason for throwing the case away; on the contrary, he grasped it more tightly in his left hand, and dropped the cudgel, which broke off a dry twig in its fall.

At this noise Torres awoke, and with the quickness of those who are always on the watch, with whom there is no transition from the sleeping to the waking state, was immediately upon his legs.

In an instant Torres had recognized with whom he had to deal. "A guariba!" he cried. And his hand seizing his manchetta, he put himself into a posture of defense.

The monkey, alarmed, jumped back at once, and not so brave before a waking man as a sleeping one, performed a rapid caper, and glided under the trees.

"It was time!" said Torres, "the rogue would have settled me without any ceremony."

Of a sudden, between the hands of the monkey, who had stopped at about twenty paces, and was watching him with violent grimaces, as if he would like to snap his fingers at him, he caught sight of his precious case.

"The beggar!" he said. "If he has not killed me, he has done what is almost as bad. He has robbed me!"

The thought that the case held his money was not, however, what then concerned him. But that which made him jump was the recollection that it contained the precious

document, the loss of which was irreparable, as it carried with it that of all his hopes.

"Botheration!" cried he. And at the moment, cost what it might to recapture his case, Torres threw himself in pursuit of the guariba.

He knew that to reach such an active animal was not easy. On the ground he could get away too fast, in the branches he could get away too far. A well-aimed gunshot could alone stop him as he ran or climbed, but Torres possessed no firearm. His sword-knife and hoe were useless unless he could get near enough to hit him.

It soon became evident that the monkey could not be reached unless by surprise. Hence Torres found it necessary to employ cunning in dealing with the mischievous animal. To stop, to hide himself behind some tree trunk, to disappear under a bush, might induce the guariba to pull up and retrace his steps, and there was nothing else for Torres to try. This was what he did, and the pursuit commenced under these conditions; but when the captain of the woods disappeared, the monkey patiently waited until he came into sight again, and at this game Torres fatigued himself without result.

"Confound the guariba!" he shouted at length. "There will be no end to this, and he will lead me back to the Brazilian frontier. If only he would let go of my case! But no! The jingling of the money amuses him. Oh, you thief! If I could only get hold of you!"

And Torres recommenced the pursuit, and the monkey scuttled off with renewed vigor. An hour passed in this way without any result. Torres showed a persistency which was quite natural. How without this document could he get his money? And then anger seized him. He swore, he stamped, he threatened the guariba. That annoying animal only responded by a chuckling which was enough to put him beside himself.

Then Torres gave himself up to the chase. He ran at top speed, entangling himself in the high undergrowth, among those thick brambles and interlacing creepers, across which the guariba passed like a steeplechaser. Big roots hidden beneath the grass lay often in the way. He stumbled over them and again started in pursuit. At length, to his astonishment he found himself shouting. "Come here!

come here! you robber!" as if he could make him understand him.

His strength gave out, breath failed him, and he was obliged to stop. "Confound it!" said he, "when I am after runaway slaves across the jungle they never give me such trouble as this! But I will have you, you wretched monkey! I will go, yes, I will go as far as my legs will carry me, and we shall see!"

The guariba had remained motionless when he saw that the adventurer had ceased to pursue him. He rested also, for he had nearly reached that degree of exhaustion which had forbidden all movement on the part of Torres. He remained like this during ten minutes, nibbling away at two or three roots, which he picked off the ground, and from time to time he rattled the case at his ear.

Torres, driven to distraction, picked up the stones within his reach and threw them at him, but did no harm at such a distance. But he hesitated to make a fresh start. On the one hand, to keep on in chase of the monkey with so little chance of reaching him was madness. On the other, to accept as definite this accidental interruption to all his plans, to be not only conquered, but cheated and hoaxed by a dumb animal, was maddening. And in the meantime Torres had begun to think that when the night came the robber would disappear without trouble, and he, the robbed one, would find a difficulty in retracing his way through the dense forest. In fact, the pursuit had taken him many miles from the bank of the river, and he would even now find it difficult to return to it.

Torres hesitated; he tried to resume his thoughts with coolness, and finally, after giving vent to a last imprecation, he was about to abandon all idea of regaining possession of his case, when once more, in spite of himself, there flashed across him the thought of his document, the remembrance of all that scaffolding on which his future hopes depended, on which he counted so much; and he resolved to make another effort.

He got up. The guariba got up too. He made several steps in advance. The monkey made as many in the rear, but this time, instead of plunging more deeply into the forest, he stopped at the foot of an enormous ficus—the tree of which the different kinds

are so numerous all over the Upper Amazonian basin.

To seize the trunk with his four hands, to climb with the agility of a clown who is acting the monkey, to hook on with his prehensile tail to the first branches, which stretched away horizontally at forty feet from the ground, and to hoist himself to the top of the tree, to the point where the higher branches just bent beneath his weight, was only sport to the active guariba, and the work of but a few seconds.

Up there, installed at his ease, he resumed his interrupted repast, and gathered the fruits which were within his reach. Torres, like him, was much in want of something to eat and drink, but it was impossible! His pouch was flat, his flask was empty.

However, instead of retracing his steps he directed them toward the tree, although the position taken up by the monkey was still more unfavorable for him. He could not dream for one instant of climbing the ficus, which the thief would have quickly abandoned for another. And all the time the miserable case rattled at his ear.

Then, in his fury, in his folly, Torres apostrophized the guariba. It would be impossible for us to tell the series of invectives in which he indulged. Not only did he call him a half-breed, which is the greatest of insults in the mouth of a Brazilian of white descent, but *curiboca*—that is to say, half-breed negro and Indian, and of all the insults that one man can hurl at another in this equatorial latitude *curiboca* is the cruelest.

But the monkey, who was only a humble quadruman, was simply amused at what would have revolted a representative of humanity.

Then Torres began to throw stones at him again, and bits of roots and everything he could get hold of that would do for a missile. Had he the hope to seriously hurt the monkey? No! he no longer knew what he was about. To tell the truth, anger at his powerlessness had deprived him of his wits. Perhaps he hoped that in one of the movements which the guariba would make in passing from branch to branch the case might escape him; perhaps he thought that if he continued to worry the monkey he might throw it at his head. But no! the monkey did not part with the case, and, holding it with one hand, he had still three left with which to move.

Torres, in despair, was just about to abandon the chase

for good, and to return toward the Amazon, when he heard the sound of voices. Yes! the sound of human voices. These were speaking about twenty paces to the right of him.

The first care of Torres was to hide himself in a dense thicket. Like a prudent man, he did not wish to show himself without at least knowing with whom he might have to deal. Panting, puzzled, his ears on the stretch, he waited, when suddenly the sharp report of a gun rang through the woods.

A cry followed, and the monkey, mortally wounded, fell heavily to the ground, still holding Torres' case.

"By Jove," he muttered, "that bullet came at the right time!" And then, without fearing to be seen, he came out of the thicket, and two young gentlemen appeared from under the trees.

They were Brazilians clothed as hunters, with leather boots, light palm-leaf hats, waistcoats, or rather tunics, buckled in at the waist, and more convenient than the national poncho. By their features and their complexion they were at once recognizable as of Portuguese descent.

Each of them was armed with one of those long guns of Spanish make which slightly remind us of the arms of the Arabs, guns of long range and considerable precision, which the dwellers in the forest of the Upper Amazon handle with success.

What had just happened was a proof of this. At an angular distance of more than eighty paces the quadruman had been shot full in the head.

The two young men carried in addition, in their belts, a sort of dagger-knife, which is known in Brazil as a *foca,* and which hunters do not hesitate to use when attacking the ounce and other wild animals, which, if not very formidable, are pretty numerous in these forests.

Torres had obviously little to fear from this meeting, and so he went on running toward the monkey's corpse.

But the young men, who were taking the same direction, had less ground to cover, and coming forward a few paces, found themselves face to face with Torres.

The latter had recovered his presence of mind. "Many thanks, gentlemen," said he gayly, as he raised the brim of his hat; "in killing this wretched animal you have just done me a great service!"

The hunters looked at him inquiringly, not knowing what value to attach to his thanks.

Torres explained matters in a few words. "You thought you had killed a monkey," said he, "but as it happens you have killed a thief!"

"If we have been of use to you," said the younger of the two, "it was by accident, but we are none the less pleased to find that we have done some good."

And, taking several steps to the rear, he bent over the guariba, and, not without an effort, withdrew the case from his stiffened hand. "Doubtless that, sir, is what belongs to you?"

"The very thing," said Torres, briskly, catching hold of the case and failing to repress a huge sigh of relief. "Whom ought I to thank, gentlemen," said he, "for the service you have rendered me?"

"My friend, Manoel, assistant-surgeon, Brazilian army," replied the young man.

"If it was I who shot the monkey, Benito," said Manoel, "it was you that pointed him out to me."

"In that case, sirs," replied Torres, "I am under an obligation to you both, as well to you, Mr. Manoel, as to you, Mr.——?"

"Benito Garral," replied Manoel.

The captain of the woods required great command over himself to avoid giving a jump when he heard this name, and more especially when the young man obligingly continued, "My father, Joam Garral, has his farm about three miles from here. If you would like, Mr.——?"

"Torres," replied the adventurer.

"If you would like to accompany us there, Mr. Torres, you will be hospitably received."

"I do not know that I can," said Torres, who, surprised by this unexpected meeting, hesitated to make a start. "I fear in truth that I am not able to accept your offer. The occurrence I have just related to you has caused me to lose time. It is necessary for me to return at once to the Amazon—as I purpose descending thence to Para."

"Very well, Mr. Torres," replied Benito, "it is not unlikely that we shall see you again in our travels, for before a month has passed my father and all his family will have taken the same road as you."

"Ah!" said Torres, sharply, "your father is thinking of recrossing the Brazilian frontier?"

"Yes, for a voyage of some months," replied Benito. "At least we hope to make him decide so. Don't we, Manoel?"

Manoel nodded affirmatively.

"Well, gentlemen," replied Torres, "it is very probable that we shall meet again on the road. But I cannot, much to my regret, accept your offer now. I thank you, nevertheless, and I consider myself as twice your debtor."

And having said so, Torres saluted the young men, who in turn saluted him, and set out on their way to the farm.

As for Torres, he looked after them as they got farther and farther away, and when he had lost sight of them—"Ah! he is about to recross the frontier!" said he, with a deep voice. "Let him recross it! and he will be still more at my mercy! Pleasant journey to you, Joam Garral!"

And having uttered these words, the captain of the woods, making for the south so as to regain the left bank of the river by the shortest road, disappeared into the dense forest.

CHAPTER III

THE GARRAL FAMILY

The village of Iquitos is situated on the left bank of the Amazon, near the seventy-fourth meridian, on that portion of the great river which still bears the name of the Maranon, and of which the bed separates Peru from the Republic of Ecuador. It is about five-and-fifty leagues to the west of the Brazilian frontier.

Iquitos, like every other collection of huts, hamlet, or village, met with in the basin of the Upper Amazon, was founded by the missionaries. Up to the seventeenth year of the century the Iquito Indians, who then formed the entire population, were settled in the interior of the province at some distance from the river. But one day the springs in their territory all dried up under the influence of a volcanic eruption, and they were obliged to come and take up their abode on the left of the Maranon. The race soon altered through the alliances which were entered into with

the river Indians, Ticunas, or Omaguas, mixed in descent with a few Spaniards.

The village is most picturesquely grouped on a kind of esplanade, and runs along at about sixty feet from the river. It consists of some forty miserable huts, whose thatched roofs only just render them worthy of the name of cottages. A stairway made of crossed trunks of trees leads up to the village, which lies hidden from the traveler's eyes until the steps have been ascended. Once at the top he finds himself before an inclosure admitting of slight defense, and consisting of many different shrubs and arborescent plants, attached to each other by festoons of lianas, which here and there have made their way above the summits of the graceful palms and banana-trees.

At the time we speak of the Indians of Iquitos went about in almost a state of nudity. The Spaniards and half-breeds alone were clothed, and much as they scorned their indigenous fellow-citizens, wore only a simple shirt, light cotton trousers, and a straw hat. All lived cheerlessly enough in the village, mixing little together, and if they did meet occasionally, it was only at such times as the bell of the mission called them to the dilapidated cottage which served them for a church.

But if existence in the village of Iquitos, as in most of the hamlets of the Upper Amazon, was almost in a rudimentary stage, it was only necessary to journey a league farther down the river to find on the same bank a wealthy settlement, with all the elements of comfortable life.

This was the farm of Joam Garral, toward which our two young friends returned after their meeting with the captain of the woods.

There, on the bend of the stream, at the Junction of the River Nanay, which is here about five hundred feet across, there had been established for many years this farm, household, or, to use the expression of the country, *fazenda*, then in the height of prosperity. The Nanay with its left bank bounded it to the north for about a mile, and for nearly the same distance to the east it ran along the bank of the larger river. To the west some small rivulets, tributaries to the Nanay, and some lagoons of small extent, separated it from the savannah and the fields devoted to the pasturage of the cattle.

It was here that Joam Garral, in 1826, twenty-six years before the date when our story opens, was received by the proprietor of the fazenda.

This Portuguese, whose name was Magalhaes, followed the trade of timber-felling, and his settlement, then recently formed, extended for about half a mile along the banks of the river.

There, hospitable as he was like all the Portuguese of the old race, Magalhaes lived with his daughter Yaquita, who after the death of her mother, had taken charge of his household. Magalhaes was an excellent worker, inured to fatigue, but lacking education. If he understood the management of the few slaves whom he owned, and the dozen Indians whom he hired, he showed himself much less apt in the various external requirements of his trade. In truth the establishment at Iquitos was not prospering, and the affairs of the Portuguese were getting somewhat embarrassed.

It was under these circumstances that Joam Garral, then twenty-two years old, found himself one day in the presence of Magalhaes. He had arrived in the country at the limit both of his strength and his resources. Magalhaes had found him half dead with hunger and fatigue in the neighboring forest. The Portuguese had an excellent heart; he did not ask the unknown where he came from, but what he wanted. The noble, high-spirited look which Joam Garral bore in spite of his exhaustion, had touched him. He received him, restored him, and, for several days to begin with, offered him a hospitality which lasted for his life.

Under such conditions it was that Joam Garral was introduced to the farm at Iquitos.

Brazilian by birth, Joam Garral was without family or fortune. Trouble, he said, had obliged him to quit his country and abandon all thoughts of return. He asked his host to excuse his entering on his past misfortunes—misfortunes as serious as they were unmerited. What he sought, and what he wished was a new life, a life of labor. He had started on his travels with some slight thought of entering a fazenda in the interior. He was educated, intelligent. He had in all his bearing that inexpressible something which tells you that the man is genuine and of frank and upright character. Magalhaes, quite taken with him,

asked him to remain at the farm, where he would, in a measure, supply that which was wanting in the worthy farmer.

Joam Garral accepted the offer without hesitation. His intention had been to join a *seringal,* or caoutchouc concern, in which in those days a good workman could earn from five to six piasters a day, and could hope to become a master if he had any luck; but Magalhaes very truly observed that if the pay was good, work was only found in the seringals at harvest time—that is to say, during only a few months of the year—and this would not constitute the permanent position that a young man ought to wish for.

The Portuguese was right, Joam Garral saw it, and entered resolutely into the service of the fazenda, deciding to devote to it all his powers.

Magalhaes had no cause to regret his generous action. His business recovered. His wood trade, which extended by means of the Amazon up to Para was soon considerably extended under the impulse of Joam Garral. The fazenda began to grow in proportion, and to spread out along the bank of the river up to its junction with the Nanay. A delightful residence was made of the house; it was raised a story, surrounded by a veranda, and half hidden under beautiful trees—mimosas, fig-sycamores, bauhinias, and paullinias, whose trunks were invisible beneath a network of scarlet-flowered bromelias and passion flowers.

At a distance, behind huge bushes and a dense mass of arborescent plants, were concealed the buildings in which the staff of the fazenda were accommodated—the servants' offices, the cabins of the blacks, and the huts of the Indians. From the bank of the river, bordered with reeds and aquatic plants, the tree-encircled house was alone visible.

A vast meadow, laboriously cleared along the lagoons, offered excellent pasturage. Cattle abounded—a new source of profit in these fertile countries, where ten per cent. interest is earned by nothing more than the skins and the hides of the animals killed for the consumption of those who raise them! A few *sitios,* or manioc and coffee plantations, were started in parts of the woods which were cleared. Fields of sugar-canes soon required the construction of a mill to crush the sacchariferous stalks, destined to be used hereafter in the manufacture of molasses, tafia,

and rum. In short, ten years after the arrival of Joam Garral at the farm at Iquitos the fazenda had become one of the richest establishments on the Upper Amazon. Thanks to the good management exercised by the young clerk over the works at home and the business abroad, its prosperity daily increased.

The Portuguese did not wait so long to acknowledge what he owed to Joam Garral. In order to recompense him in proportion to his merits he had from the first given him an interest in the profits of his business, and four years after his arrival he had made him a partner on the same footing as himself, and with equal shares.

But there was more that he had in store for him. Yaquita, his daughter, had, in this silent young man, so gentle to others, so stern to himself, recognized the sterling qualities which her father had done. She was in love with him, but though on his side Joam had not remained insensible to the merits and the beauty of this excellent girl, he was too proud and reserved to dream of asking her to marry him.

A serious incident hastened the solution.

Magalhaes was one day superintending a clearance and was mortally wounded by the fall of a tree. Carried home helpless to the farm, and feeling himself lost, he raised up Yaquita, who was weeping by his side, took her hand, and put it into that of Joam Garral, making him swear to take her for his wife.

"You have remade my fortune," he said, "and I shall not die in peace unless by this union I know that the fortune of my daughter is assured."

"I can continue her devoted servant, her brother, her protector, without being her husband," Joam Garral had at first replied. "I owe you all, Magalhaes. I will never forget it, but the price you would pay for my endeavors is out of all proportion to what they are worth."

The old man insisted. Death would not allow him to wait; he demanded the promise, and it was made to him.

Yaquita was then twenty-two years old, Joam was twenty-six. They loved each other, and they were married some hours before the death of Magalhaes, who had just strength left to bless their union. It was under these circumstances that in 1830 Joam Garral became the new fazender of

Iquitos, to the immense satisfaction of all those who composed the staff of the farm.

The prosperity of the settlement could not do otherwise than grow when these two minds were thus united. A year after her marriage Yaquita presented her husband with a son, and, two years after, a daughter. Benito and Minha, the grandchildren of the old Portuguese, became worthy of their grandfather, children worthy of Joam and Yaquita.

The daughter grew to be one of the most charming of girls. She never left the fazenda. Brought up in pure and healthy surroundings, in the midst of the beauteous nature of the tropics, the education given to her by her mother, and the instruction received by her from her father, were ample. What more could she have learned in a convent at Manaos or Belem? Where would she have found better examples of the domestic virtues? Would her mind and feelings have been more delicately formed away from her home? If it was ordained that she was not to succeed her mother in the management of the fazenda, she was equal to any other position to which she might be called.

With Benito it was another thing. His father very wisely wished him to receive as solid and complete an education as could then be obtained in the large towns of Brazil. There was nothing which the rich fazender refused his son. Benito was possessed of a cheerful disposition, an active mind, a lively intelligence, and qualities of heart equal to those of his head. At the age of twelve he was sent into Para, to Belum, and there, under the direction of excellent professors, he acquired the elements of an education which could not but eventually make him a distinguished man.

During the first years of his residence at Belum, Benito had made the acquaintance of Manoel Valdez. This young man, the son of a merchant in Para, was pursuing his studies in the same institution as Benito. The conformity of their characters and their tastes proved no barrier to their uniting in the closest of friendships, and they became inseparable companions.

Manoel, born in 1832, was one year older than Benito. He had only a mother, and she lived on the modest fortune which her husband had left her. When Manoel's preliminary studies were finished, he had taken up the subject of medicine. He had a passionate taste for that noble pro-

fession, and his intention was to enter the army, toward which he felt himself attracted.

At the time that we saw him with his friend Benito, Manoel Valdez had already obtained his first step, and he had come away on leave for some months to the fazenda, where he was accustomed to pass his holidays. Well-built, and of distinguished bearing, with a certain native pride which became him well, the young man was treated by Joam and Yaquita as another son. But if this quality of son made him the brother of Benito, the title was scarcely appreciated by him when Minha was concerned, for he soon became attached to the young girl by a bond more intimate than could exist between brother and sister.

In the year 1853—of which four months had already passed before the commencement of this history—Joam Garral attained the age of forty-eight years. In that sultry climate, which wears men away so quickly, he had known how, by sobriety, self-denial, suitable living, and constant work, to remain untouched where others had prematurely succumbed. His hair, which he wore short, and his beard, which was full, had already grown gray, and gave him the look of a puritan. The proverbial honesty of the Brazilian merchants and fazenders showed itself in his features, of which straightforwardness was the leading characteristic. His calm temperament seemed to indicate an interior fire, kept well under control. The fearlessness of his look denoted a deep-rooted strength, to which, when danger threatened, he could never appeal in vain.

But, notwithstanding, one could not help remarking about this quiet man of vigorous health, with whom all things had succeeded in life, a depth of sadness which even the tenderness of Yaquita had not been able to subdue.

Respected by all, placed in all the conditions that would seem necessary to happiness, why was not this just man more cheerful and less reserved? Why did he seem to be happy for others and not for himself? Was this disposition attributable to some secret grief? Herein was a constant source of anxiety to his wife.

Yaquita was now forty-four. In that tropical country where women are already old at thirty she had learned the secret of resisting the climate's destructive influences, and her features, a little sharpened, but still beautiful, retained

the haughty outline of the Portuguese type, in which nobility of face unites so naturally with dignity of mind.

Minha was twenty years old. A lovely girl, brunette, and with large blue eyes, eyes which seemed to open into her very soul; of middle height, good figure, and winning grace, in every way the very image of Yaquita. A little more serious than her brother, affable, good-natured, and charitable, she was beloved by all. On this subject you could fearlessly interrogate the humblest servants of the fazenda. It was unnecessary to ask her brother's friend, Manoel Valdez, what he thought of her! He was too much interested in the question to have replied without a certain amount of partiality.

This sketch of the Garral family would not be complete, and would lack some of its features, were we not to mention the numerous staff of the fazenda. In the first place, then, it behooves us to name an old negress, of some sixty years, called Cybele, free through the will of her master, a slave through her affection for him and his, the nurse of Yaquita. She was one of the family. She thee-ed and thou-ed both daughter and mother. The whole of this good creature's life had been passed in these fields, in the middle of these forests, on that bank of the river which bounded the horizon of the farm. Coming as a child to Iquitos in the slave-trading times, she had never quitted the village; she was married there, and early a widow, had lost her only son, and remained in the service of Magalhaes. Of the Amazon she knew no more than what flowed before her eyes.

With her, and more specially attached to the service of Minha, was a pretty, laughing mulatto, of the same age as her mistress, to whom she was completely devoted. She was called Lina. One of those gentle creatures, a little spoiled perhaps, to whom a good deal of familiarity is allowed, but who in return adore their mistresses. Quick, restless, coaxing, and lazy, she could do what she pleased in the house.

As for servants they were of two kinds—Indians, of whom there were about a hundred, employed always for the works of the fazenda, and blacks to about double the number, who were not yet free, but whose children were not born slaves. Joam Garral had herein preceded the

Brazilian Government. In this country, moreover, the negroes coming from Benguela, the Congo, or the Gold Coast were always treated with kindness, and it was not at the fazenda of Iquitos that one would look for those sad examples of cruelty which were so frequent on foreign plantations.

CHAPTER IV
HESITATION

Manoel was in love with the sister of his friend Benito, and she was in love with him. Each was sensible of the other's worth, and each was worthy of the other.

When he was no longer able to mistake the state of his feelings toward Minha, Manoel had opened his heart to Benito.

"Manoel, my friend," had immediately answered the enthusiastic young fellow, "you could not do better than wish to marry my sister. Leave it to me. I will commence by speaking to the mother, and I think I can promise that you will not have to wait long for her consent!"

Benito had nothing to tell his mother which she did not know; Yaquita had already divined the young people's secret. Before ten minutes had elapsed Benito was in the presence of Minha. They had but to agree; there was no need for much eloquence. At the first words the head of the gentle girl was laid on her brother's shoulder, and the confession, "I am so happy!" was whispered from her heart.

There could be little doubt as to Joam Garral's consent. But if Yaquita and her children did not at once speak to him about the marriage, it was because they wished at the same time to touch on a question which might be more difficult to solve. That question was, Where should the wedding take place?

Where should it be celebrated? In the humble cottage which served for the village church? Why not? Joam and Yaquita had there received the nuptial benediction of the Padre Passanha, who was then the curate of Iquitos parish. At that time, as now, there was no distinction in Brazil between the civil and religious acts, and the registers

of the mission were sufficient testimony to a ceremony which no officer of the civil power was intrusted to attend to.

Joam Garral would probably wish the marriage to take place at Iquitos, with grand ceremonies and the attendance of the whole staff of the fazenda, but if such was to be his idea he would have to withstand a vigorous attack concerning it.

"Manoel," Minha had said to her betrothed, "if I was consulted in the matter we should not be married here, but at Para. Madame Valdez is an invalid; she cannot visit Iquitos, and I should not like to become her daughter without knowing and being known by her. My mother agrees with me in thinking so. We should like to persuade my father to take us to Belem. Do you not think so?"

To this proposition Manoel had replied by pressing Minha's hand. He also had a great wish for his mother to be present at his marriage. Benito had approved the scheme without hesitation, and it was only necessary to persuade Joam Garral. And hence on this day the young men had gone out hunting in the woods, so as to leave Yaquita alone with her husband.

For five-and-twenty years Joam Garral had never crossed the Brazilian frontier, his wife and daughter had never set foot on Brazilian soil. The longing to see something of that beautiful country of which Benito was often talking was not wanting, nevertheless. Two or three times Yaquita had sounded her husband in the matter. But she had noticed that the thought of leaving the fazenda, if only for a few weeks, brought an increase of sadness to his face. His eyes would close, and, in a tone of mild reproach, he would answer: "Why leave our home? Are we not comfortable here?"

And Yaquita, in the presence of the man whose active kindness and unchangeable tenderness rendered her so happy, had not the courage to persist.

This time, however, there was a serious reason to make it worth while. The marriage of Minha afforded an excellent opportunity, it being so natural for them to accompany her to Belem, where she was going to live with her husband. She would there see and learn to love the mother of Manoel Valdez. How could Joam Garral hesitate in the face of so praiseworthy a desire? Why, on the other hand,

did he not participate in this desire to become acquainted with her who was to be the second mother of his child?

Yaquita took her husband's hand, and with that gentle voice which had been to him all the music of his life, "Joam," she said, "I am going to talk to you about something which we ardently wish, and which will make you as happy as we are."

"What is it about, Yaquita?" asked Joam.

"Manoel loves your daughter, he is loved by her, and in this union they will find the happiness——"

At the first words of Yaquita Joam Garral had risen, without being able to control a sudden start. His eyes were immediately cast down, and he seemed to designedly avoid the look of his wife.

"What is the matter with you?" asked she.

"Minha? To get married!" murmured Joam.

"My dear," said Yaquita, feeling somewhat hurt, "have you any objection to make to the marriage? Have you not for some time noticed the feelings which Manoel has entertained toward our daughter?"

"Yes; and a year since——"

And Joam sat down without finishing his thoughts. By an effort of his will he had again become master of himself. The unaccountable impression which had been made upon him disappeared. Gradually his eyes returned to meet those of Yaquita, and he remained thoughtfully looking at her.

Yaquita took his hand. "Joam," she said, "have I been deceived? Had you no idea that this marriage would one day take place, and that it would give her every chance of happiness?"

"Yes," answered Joam. "All! Certainly! But, Yaquita, this wedding—this wedding that we are both thinking of—when is it coming off? Shortly?"

"It will come off when you choose, Joam."

"And it will take place here—at Iquitos?"

This question obliged Yaquita to enter on the other matter which she had at heart. She did not do so, however, without some hesitation, which was quite intelligible.

"Joam," said she, after a moment's silence, "listen to me. Regarding this wedding, I have got a proposal which I hope you will approve of. Two or three times during the

last twenty years I have asked you to take me and my daughter to the provinces of the Lower Amazon, and to Para, where we have never been. The cares of the fazenda, the works which have required your presence, have not allowed you to grant our request. To absent yourself even for a few days, would then have injured your business. But now everything has been successful beyond your dreams, and if the hour of repose has not yet come for you, you can at least for a few weeks get away from your work."

Joam Garral did not answer, but Yaquita felt his hand tremble in hers, as though under the shock of some sorrowful recollection. At the same time a half-smile came to her husband's lips—a mute invitation for her to finish what she had begun.

"Joam," she continued, "here is an occasion which we shall never see again in this life. Minha is going to be married away from us, and is going to leave us! It is the first sorrow which our daughter has caused us, and my heart quails when I think of the separation which is so near! But I should be content if I could accompany her to Belem! Does it not seem right to you, even in other respects, that we should know her husband's mother, who is to replace me, and to whom we are about to intrust her? Added to this, Minha does not wish to grieve Madame Valdez by getting married at a distance from her. When we were married, Joam, if your mother had been alive, would you not have liked her to be present at your wedding?"

At these words of Yaquita, Joam made a movement which he could not repress.

"My dear," continued Yaquita, "with Minha, with our two sons, Benito and Manoel, with you, how I should like to see Brazil, and to journey down this splendid river, even to the provinces on the sea-coast through which it runs! It seems to me that the separation would be so much less cruel! As we came back we should revisit our daughter in her house with her second mother. I would not think of her as gone I knew not where. I would fancy myself much less a stranger to the doings of her life."

Joam Garral leaned on his elbows. For a moment he hid his face in his hands, like a man who had to collect his thoughts before he made answer. There was evidently some

hesitation which he was anxious to overcome, even some trouble which his wife felt but could not explain. A secret battle was being fought under that thoughtful brow. Yaquita got anxious, and almost reproached herself for raising the question. Anyhow, she was resigned to what Joam should decide. If the expedition would cost too much, she would silence her wishes; she would never more speak of leaving the fazenda, and never ask the reason for the inexplicable refusal.

Some minutes passed. Joam Garral rose. He went to the door, and did not return. Then he seemed to give a last look on that glorious nature, on that corner of the world where for twenty years of his life he had met with all his happiness.

Then with slow steps he returned to his wife. His face bore a new expression, that of a man who had taken a last decision, and with whom irresolution had ceased. "You are right," he said, in a firm voice. "The journey is necessary. When shall we start?"

"Ah! Joam! my Joam!" cried Yaquita, in her joy. "Thank you for me! Thank you for them!" And tears of affection came to her eyes as her husband clasped her to his heart.

At this moment happy voices were heard outside at the door of the house. Manoel and Benito appeared an instant after at the threshold, almost at the same moment as Minha entered the room.

"Children! your father consents!" cried Yaquita. "We are going to Belem!"

With a grave face, and without speaking a word, Joam Garral received the congratulations of his son and the kisses of his daughter.

"And what date, father," asked Benito, "have you fixed for the wedding?"

"Date?" answered Joam. "Date? We shall see. We will fix it at Belem."

"I am so happy! I am so happy!" repeated Minha, as she had done on the day when she had first known of Manoel's request. "We shall now see the Amazon in all its glory throughout its course through the provinces of Brazil! Thanks, father!"

And the young enthusiast, whose imagination was already

stirred, continued to her brother and to Manoel: "Let us be off to the library! Let us get hold of every book and every map that we can find which will tell us anything about this magnificent river-system! Don't let us travel like blind folks! I want to see everything and know everything about this king of the rivers of the earth!"

CHAPTER V

THE AMAZON

"THE largest river in the whole world!" said Benito to Manoel Valdez, on the morrow.

They were sitting on the bank which formed the southern boundary of the fazenda, and looking at the liquid molecules passing slowly by, which, coming from the enormous range of the Andes, were on their road to lose themselves in the Atlantic Ocean, eight hundred leagues away.

"And the river which carries to the sea the largest volume of water!" replied Manoel.

"A volume so considerable," added Benito, "that it freshens the sea-water for an immense distance from its mouth, and the force of whose current is felt by ships at eight leagues from the coast!"

"And along its whole extent," continued Manoel, "like the thousand tentacles of some gigantic polyp, two hundred tributaries, flowing from north to south, themselves fed by smaller affluents without number, by the side of which the large rivers of Europe are but petty streamlets."

"And in its course of five hundred and sixty islands, without counting islets, drifting or stationary, forming a kind of archipelago, and yielding of themselves the wealth of a kingdom."

"And along its banks canals, lagoons, and lakes, such as cannot be met with even in Switzerland, Lombardy, Scotland, or Canada."

"A river which, fed by its myriad tributaries, discharges into the Atlantic over two hundred and fifty millions of cubic meters of water every hour."

"A river whose course serves as the boundary of two republics, and sweeps majestically across the largest empire of South America, as if it were, in very truth, the Pacific

Ocean itself flowing out along its own canal into the Atlantic."

"And what a mouth! An arm of the sea in which one island, Marajo, has a circumference of more than five hundred leagues!"

"And whose waters the ocean does not pond back without raising in a strife which is phenomenal, a tide-race, or *pororoca,* to which the ebbs, the bores, and the eddies of other rivers are but tiny riplets fanned up by the breeze."

"A river which three names are scarcely enough to distinguish, and which ships of heavy tonnage, without any change in their cargoes, can ascend for more than three thousand miles from its mouth."

"A river which, by itself, its affluents, and subsidiary streams, opens a navigable commercial route across the whole of the south of the continent, passing from the Magdalena to Ortequazza, from the Ortequazza to the Caqueta, from the Caqueta to the Putumayo, from the Putumayo to the Amazon! Four thousand miles of water-way, which only require a few canals to make the network of navigation complete!"

"In short, the biggest and most admirable river-system which we have in the world."

These two young men were speaking in a kind of frenzy of their incomparable river. They were themselves children of this great Amazon, whose affluents, well worthy of itself, from the highways, which penetrate Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, New Grenada, Venezuela, and the four Guianas—English, French, Dutch, and Brazilian.

What nations, what races, has it seen whose origin is lost in the far-distant past! It is one of the largest rivers of the globe. Numbers of states still claim the honor of giving it birth. The Amazon was not likely to escape the inevitable fate, and Peru, Ecuador, and Columbia have for years disputed as to the honor of its glorious paternity.

To-day, however, there seems to be little doubt but that the Amazon rises in Peru, in the district of Huaraco, in the department of Tarma, and that it starts from the Lake of Lauricocha, which is situated between the eleventh and twelfth degree of south latitude.

Those who make the river rise in Bolivia, and descend from the mountains of Titicaca, have to prove that the true

Amazon is the Ucayali, which is formed by the junction of the Paro and the Apurimac—an assertion which is now generally rejected.

At its departure from Lake Lauricocha the youthful river starts toward the northeast for a distance of five hundred and sixty miles, and does not strike to the east until it has received an important tributary—the Panta. It is called the Maranon in its journey through Columbia and Peru up to the Brazilian frontier—or, rather, the Moranhao for Maranon is only the French rendering of the Portuguese name.

From the frontier of Brazil to Manaos, where the superb Rio Negro joins it, it takes the name of the Solimaes, or Solimoens, from the name of the Indian tribe Solimao, of which survivors are still found in the neighboring provinces. And, finally, from Manaos to the sea it is the Amasenas, or river of the Amazons, a name given it by the old Spaniards, the descendants of the adventurous Orellana, whose vague, but enthusiastic stories went to show that there existed a tribe of female warriors on the Rio Nhamunda, one of the middle-sized affluents of the great river.

From its commencement the Amazon is recognizable as destined to become a magnificent stream. There are neither rapids nor obstacles of any sort until it reaches a defile, where its course is slightly narrowed between two picturesque and unequal precipices. No falls are met with until this point is reached, where it curves to the eastward, and passes through the intermediary chain of the Andes. Hereabouts are a few waterfalls, were it not for which the river would be navigable from its mouth to its source. As it is, however, according to Humboldt, the Amazon is free for five-sixths of its length.

To the beauties of this unrivaled river, which waters the finest country in the world, and keeps along its whole course at a few degrees to the south of the equator, there is to be added another quality, possessed by neither the Nile, Mississippi, nor the Livingstone—or, in other words, the old Congo-Zaira-Lualaba—and that is (although some ill-informed travelers have stated to the contrary) that the Amazon crosses a most healthy part of South America. Its basin is constantly swept by westerly winds. It is not a narrow valley surrounded by high mountains which borders its banks, but a huge plain, measuring three hundred and

fifty leagues from north to south, scarcely varied with a few knolls, whose whole extent the atmospheric currents can traverse unchecked.

Professor Agassiz very properly protested against the pretended unhealthiness of the climate of a country which is destined to become one of the most active of the world's producers. According to him, "a soft and gentle breeze is constantly observable, and produces an evaporation, thanks to which the temperature is kept down, and the sun does not give out heat unchecked. The constancy of this refreshing breeze renders the climate of the river Amazon agreeable, and even delightful."

In the sixteenth century Orellana, the lieutenant of one of the brothers Pizarro, descended the Rio Negro, arrived on the main river in 1540, ventured without a guide cross the unknown district, and, after eighteen months of a navigation of which his record is most marvelous, reached the mouth.

In 1636 and 1637 the Portuguese Pedro Texeira ascended the Amazon to Napo, with a fleet of forty-seven pirogues.

In 1743 La Condamine, after having measured an arc of the meridian at the equator, left his companions Bouguer and Godin des Odonais, embarked on the Chinchipe, descended it to its junction with the Maranon, reached the mouth at Napo on the 31st of July, just in time to observe an emersion of the first satellite of Jupiter—which allowed this "Humboldt of the eighteenth century" to accurately determine the latitude and longitude of the spot—visited the villages on both banks, and on the 6th of September arrived in front of the fort of Para. This immense journey had important results—not only was the course of the Amazon made out in scientific fashion, but it seemed almost certain that it communicated with the Orinoco.

Fifty-five years later Humboldt and Bonpland completed the valuable work of La Condamine, and drew up the map of the Maranon as far as Napo.

Since this period the Amazon itself and all its principal tributaries have been frequently visited. But what has won the greatest honor for the Brazilian Government is that on the 31st of July, 1857, after numerous frontier disputes between France and Brazil, about the Guiana boundary, the course of the Amazon was declared to be free and open to

all flags; and, to make practice harmonize with theory, Brazil entered into negotiations with the neighboring powers for the exploration of every river-road in the basin of the Amazon.

To-day lines of well-found steamboats, which correspond direct with Liverpool, are plying on the river from its mouth up to Manaos; others ascend to Iquitos; others by way of the Tapajoz, the Madeira, the Rio Negro, or the Purus, make their way into the center of Peru and Bolivia. One can easily imagine the progress which commerce will one day make in this immense and wealthy area, which is without a rival in the world.

But to this medal of the future there is a reverse. No progress can be accomplished without detriment to the indigenous races. Such is the law of progress. The Indians will disappear. Before the Anglo-Saxon race Australians and Tasmanians have vanished. Before the conquerors of the Far West the North American Indians have been wiped out. One day perhaps the Arabs will be annihilated by the colonization of the French.

But we must return to 1852. The means of communication, so numerous now, did not then exist, and the journey of Joam Garral would require not less than four months, owing to the conditions under which it was made.

Hence this observation of Benito, while the two friends were watching the river as it gently flowed at their feet: "Manoel, my friend, if there is very little interval between our arrival at Belem and the moment of our separation, the time will appear to you to be very short."

"Yes, Benito," said Manoel, "and very long as well, for Minha cannot be my wife until the end of the voyage."

CHAPTER VI

A FOREST ON THE GROUND

The Garral family were in high glee. The magnificent journey on the Amazon was to be undertaken under conditions as agreeable as possible. Not only were the fazender and his family to start on a voyage for several months, but as we shall see, he was to be accompanied by a part of the staff of the farm.

In beholding every one happy around him, Joam forgot the anxieties which appeared to trouble his life. From the day his decision was taken he had been another man, and when he busied himself about the preparations for the expedition he regained his former activity. His people rejoiced exceedingly at seeing him again at work. His moral self reacted against his physical self, and Joam again became the active, energetic man of his earlier years, and moved about once more as though he had spent his life in the open air, under the invigorating influences of forests, fields, and running waters.

Moreover, the few weeks that were to precede the departure had been well employed. At this period, as we have just remarked, the course of the Amazon was not yet furrowed by the numberless steam-vessels, which companies were only then thinking of putting on the river. The service was worked by individuals on their own account alone, and often the boats were only employed in the business of the riverside establishments.

These boats were either *ubas,* canoes made from the trunk of a tree, hollowed out by fire, and finished with the ax, pointed in front, and heavy and broad in the stern, able to carry from one to a dozen paddlers, and of three or four tons burden; *cgaritcas,* constructed on a larger scale, of broader design, partly covered in the center with a roof of foliage, and leaving on each side a gangway for the rowers; or, *jangadas,* rafts of no particular shape, propelled by a triangular sail, and surmounted by a cabin of mud and straw, which served the Indian and his family for a floating home.

These three kinds of craft formed the lesser flotilla of the Amazon, and were only suited for a moderate traffic of passengers or merchandise.

Larger vessels, however, existed, either *vigilingas,* ranging from eight up to ten tons, with three masts rigged with red sails, and rowed by four long paddles not at all easy to work against the stream, or *cobertas,* of twenty tons burden, a kind of junk with a poop behind and a cabin down below, with two masts and square sails of unequal size, and propelled, when the wind fell, by six long sweeps which Indians worked from a forecastle.

But neither of these vessels satisfied Joam Garral. From

the moment that he had resolved to descend the Amazon he had thought of making the most of the voyage by carrying a huge convoy of goods into Para. From this point of view there was no necessity to descend the river in a hurry. And the determination to which he had come pleased every one, excepting, perhaps, Manoel, who would for very good reasons have preferred some rapid steamboat.

But though the means of transport devised by Joam were primitive in the extreme, he was going to take with him a numerous following and abandon himself to the stream under exceptional conditions of comfort and security.

It would be, in truth, as if a part of the fazenda of Iquitos had been cut away from the bank and carried down the Amazon with all that composed the family of the fazender—masters and servants, in their dwellings, their cottages, and their huts.

The settlement of Iquitos included a part of these magnificent forests which, in the central districts of South America, are practically inexhaustible. Joam Garral thoroughly understood the management of these woods, which were rich in the most precious and diverse species adapted for joinery, cabinet-work, ship-building, and carpentry, and from them he annually drew considerable profits.

The river was there in front of him, and could it not be as safely and economically used as a railway if one existed? So every year Joam Garral felled some hundreds of trees from his stock and formed immense rafts of floating wood, of joists, beams, and slightly squared trunks, which were taken to Para in charge of capable pilots who were thoroughly acquainted with the depths of the river and the direction of its currents.

This year Joam Garral decided to do as he had done in preceding years. Only, when the raft was made up, he was going to leave to Benito all the detail of the trading part of the business. But there was no time to lose. The beginning of June was the best season to start, for the waters increased by the floods of the upper basin would gradually and gradually subside until the month of October.

The first steps had thus to be taken without delay, for the raft was to be of unusual proportions. It would be necessary to fell a half-mile square of the forest which was

situated at the junction of the Nanay and the Amazon—that is to say, the whole river side of the fazenda, to form the enormous mass, for such were the jangadas, or river rafts, which attained the dimensions of a small island.

It was in this jangada, safer than any other vessel of the country, larger than a hundred egariteas or vigilingas coupled together, that Joam Garral proposed to embark with his family, his servants, and his merchandise.

"Excellent idea!" had cried Minha, clapping her hands, when she learned her father's scheme.

"Yes," said Yaquita, "and in that way we shall reach Belem without danger or fatigue."

"And during the stoppages we can have some hunting in the forests on the banks," added Benito.

"Won't it take rather long?" observed Manoel; "could we not hit upon some quicker way of descending the Amazon?"

It would take some time, obviously, but the interested observation of the young doctor received no attention from any one.

Joam Garral then called in an Indian who was the principal manager of the fazenda. "In a month," he said to him, "the jangada must be built and ready to launch!"

"We'll set to work this very day, sir!"

It was a heavy task. There were about a hundred Indians and blacks, and during the first fortnight in May they did wonders. Some people unaccustomed to these great tree-massacres, would perhaps have groaned to see giants many hundred years old fall in a few hours beneath the axes of the woodmen; but there was such a quantity on the banks of the river, up stream and down stream, even to the most distant points of the horizon, that the felling of this half-mile of forest would scarcely have an appreciable void.

The superintendent of the men, after receiving the instructions of Joam Garral, first cleared the ground of the creepers, brushwood, weeds, and arborescent plants which obstructed it. Before taking to the saw and the ax they armed themselves with a felling-sword, that indispensable tool of every one who desires to penetrate the Amazonian forests, a large blade slightly curved, wide and flat, and two or three feet long, and strongly handled, which the

natives wield with consummate address. In a few hours, with the help of the felling-sword, they cleared the ground, cut down the underwood, and opened large gaps into the densest portion of the wood.

In this way the work progressed. The ground was cleared in front of the woodmen. The old trunks were divested of their clothing of creepers, cacti, ferns, mosses, and bromelias. They were stripped naked to the bark, until such time as the bark itself was stripped from off them.

Then the whole of the workers, before whom fled an innumerable crowd of monkeys who were hardly their superiors in agility, slung themselves into the upper branches, sawing off the heavier boughs and cutting down the topmost limbs, which had to be cleared away on the spot. Very soon there remained only a doomed forest, with long, bare stems, bereft of their crowns, through which the sun luxuriantly shot its rays on the humid soil which perhaps it had never before caressed.

There was not a single tree which could not be used for some work of skill, either in carpentry or cabinet-work. There, shooting up like columns of ivory ringed with brown, were wax-palms one hundred and twenty feet high, and four feet thick at their base. There was the iron-wood, and more particularly the *ibiriratea,* nearly black in its skin, and so close-grained that of it the Indians make their battle-axes; *jacarandas,* more precious than mahogany; *caesalpinas,* only now found in the depths of the old forests which have escaped the woodman's ax; *sapucaias,* one hundred and fifty feet high, buttressed by natural arches, which, starting from three yards from their base, rejoin the tree some thirty feet up the stem, twining themselves round the trunk like the filatures of a twisted column.

Three weeks after the work was begun not one was standing of all the trees which had covered the angle of the Amazon and the Nanay. The clearance was complete. Joam Garral had not even had to bestir himself in the demolition of a forest which it would take twenty or thirty years to replace. Not a stick of young or old wood was left to mark the boundary of a future clearing, not even an angle to mark the limit of the denudation. It was indeed a clean sweep; the trees were cut to the level of the earth, to wait the day when their roots would be got out, over

which the coming spring would still spread its verdant cloak.

This square space, washed on its sides by the waters of the river and its tributary, was destined to be cleared, ploughed, planted, and sown, and the following year fields of manioc, coffee-shrubs, sugar-canes, arrowroot, maize, and peanuts would occupy the ground so recently covered by the trees.

The last week of the month had not arrived when the trunks, classified according to their varieties and specific gravity, were symmetrically arranged on the bank of the Amazon, at the spot where the immense jangada was to be built—which, with the different habitations for the accommodation of the crew, would become a veritable floating village—to wait the time when the waters of the river, swollen by the floods, would raise it and carry it for hundreds of leagues to the Atlantic coast.

The whole time the work was going on Joam Garral had been engaged in superintending it. From the clearing to the bank of the fazenda he had formed a large mound, on which the portions of the raft were disposed, and to this matter he had attended entirely himself.

Yaquita was occupied with Cybele with the preparations for the departure, though the old negress could not be made to understand why they wanted to go or what they hoped to see.

"But you will see things that you never saw before," Yaquita kept saying to her.

"Will they be better than what we see now?" was Cybele's invariable reply.

Minha and her favorite for their part took care of what more particularly concerned them. They were not preparing for a simple voyage; for them it was a permanent departure, and there were a thousand details to look after for settling in the other country in which the young mulatto was to live with the mistress to whom she was so devotedly attached. Minha was a trifle sorrowful, but the joyous Lina was quite unaffected at leaving Iquitos. Minha Valdez would be the same to her as Minha Garral; to check her spirits she would have to be separated from her mistress, and that was never thought of.

Benito had actively assisted his father in the work, which

was on the point of completion. He commenced his apprenticeship to the trade of a fazender, which would probably one day become his own, as he was about to do to that of a merchant on their descent of the river.

As for Manoel, he divided his time between the house, where Yaquita and her daughter were as busy as possible, and the clearing, to which Benito fetched him rather oftener than he thought convenient, and on the whole the division was very unequal, as may well be imagined.

CHAPTER VII

FOLLOWING A LIANA

It was a Sunday, the 26th of May, and the young people had made up their minds to take a holiday. The weather was splendid, the heat being tempered by the refreshing breezes which blew off the Cordilleras, and everything invited them out for an excursion into the country.

Benito and Manoel had offered to accompany Minha through the thick woods which bordered the right bank of the Amazon opposite the fazenda. It was, in a manner, a farewell visit to the charming environs of Iquitos. The young men went equipped for the chase, but as sportsmen who had no intention of going far from their companions in pursuit of any game. Manoel could be trusted for that, and the girls—for Lina could not leave her mistress—went prepared for a walk, an excursion of two or three leagues being not too long to frighten them.

"Well, Manoel," said Minha, "it is for me to do the honors of the forest; you are only a stranger in these regions of the Upper Amazon! We are at home here, and you must allow me to do my duty, as mistress of the house."

"Dearest Minha!" replied the young man, "you will be none the less mistress of your house in our town of Belem, than at the fazenda of Iquitos, and there as here——"

"Now then!" interrupted Benito, "you did not come here to exchange loving speeches, I imagine! Just forget for a few hours that you are engaged!"

"Not for an hour—not for an instant!" said Manoel.

"Perhaps you will if Minha orders you?"

"Minha will not order me."

"Who knows?" said Lina, laughing.

"Lina is right," answered Minha, who held out her hand to Manoel. "Try to forget! Forget! my brother requires it. All is broken off! As long as this walk lasts we are not engaged: I am no more than the sister of Benito! You are only my friend!"

"To be sure," said Benito.

"Bravo—bravo! there are only strangers here," said the young mulatto, clasping her hands.

"Strangers who see each other for the first time," added the girl; "who meet, bow to——"

"Mademoiselle!" said Manoel, turning to Minha.

"To whom have I the honor to speak, sir?" said she, in the most serious manner possible.

"To Manoel Valdez, who will be glad if your brother will introduce me."

"Oh, away with your nonsense!" cried Benito. "Stupid idea that I had! Be engaged, my friends—be it as much as you like! Be it always!"

"Always!" said Minha, from whom the word escaped so naturally that Lina's peal of laughter redoubled.

A grateful glance from Manoel repaid Minha for the imprudence of her tongue.

"Come along," said Benito, so as to get his sister out of her embarrassment; "if we walk on we shall not talk so much."

"One moment, brother," she said. "You have seen how ready I am to obey you. You wished to oblige Manoel and me to forget each other, so as not to spoil your walk. Very well; and now I am going to ask a sacrifice from you so that you shall not spoil mine. Whether it pleases you or not, Benito, you must promise me to forget——"

"Forget what?"

"That you are a sportsman."

"What! you forbid me to——"

"I forbid you to fire at any of these charming birds—any of the parrots, caciques, or curucus which are flying about so happily among the trees? And the same interdiction with regard to the smaller game with which we shall have to do to-day. If any ounce, jaguar, or such thing comes too near, well——"

"If not, I will take Manoel's arm, and we shall save or

lose ourselves, and you will be obliged to run after us!"

"Would you not like me to refuse, eh?" asked Benito, looking at Manoel.

"I think I should!" replied the young man.

"Well, then—no!" said Benito; "I do not refuse; I will obey and annoy you. Come on!"

And so the four, followed by the black, struck under the splendid trees, whose thick foliage prevented the sun's rays from ever reaching the soil.

There is nothing more magnificent than this part of the right bank of the Amazon. There, in such picturesque confusion, so many different trees shoot up that it is possible to count more than a hundred different species in a square mile. A forester could easily see that no woodman had been there with his hatchet or ax, for the effects of a clearing are visible for many centuries afterward. If the new trees are even a hundred years old, the general aspect still differs from what it was originally, for the lianas and other parasitic plants alter, and signs remain which no native can misunderstand.

Minha made Manoel admire the natural wonders which could not be found in their simplicity in the more civilized provinces of the east. He listened to her more with his eyes than his ears, for the cries and the songs of these thousands of birds were every now and then so penetrating that he was not able to hear what she said. The noisy laughter of Lina was alone sufficiently shrill to ring out with its joyous note above every kind of clucking, chirping, hooting, whistling, and cooing.

At the end of an hour they had scarcely gone a mile. As they left the river the trees assumed another aspect, and the animal life was no longer met with near the ground, but at from sixty to eighty feet above, where troops of monkeys chased each other along the higher branches. Here and there a few cones of the solar rays shot down into the underwood. In fact, in these tropical forests light does not seem to be necessary for their existence. The air is enough for the vegetable growth, whether it be large or small, tree or plant, and all the heat required for the development of their sap is derived not from the surrounding atmosphere, but from the bosom of the soil itself, where it is stored up as in an enormous stove.

And on the grass-plantains, orchids, cacti, and in short all the parasites which formed a little forest beneath the large one, many marvelous insects were they tempted to pluck as though they had been genuine blossoms—nestors with blue wings like shimmering watered silk, leilu butterflies reflexed with gold and striped with fringes of green, agrippina moths, ten inches long, with leaves for wings, maribunda bees, like living emeralds set in sockets of gold, and legions, valagumas with breastplates of bronze, and green elytræ, with yellow light pouring from their eyes, who, when the night comes, illuminate the forest with their many-colored scintillations.

"What wonders! What wonders!" repeated the enthusiastic girl.

"You are at home, Minha, or at least you say so," said Benito, "and that is the way you talk of your riches!"

"Sneer away, little brother!" replied Minha; "such beautiful things are only lent to us; is it not so, Manoel? They come from the hand of the Almighty and belong to the world!"

"Let Benito laugh on, Minha," said Manoel. "He hides it very well, but he is a poet himself when his time comes, and he admires as much as we do all these beauties of nature. Only, when his gun is on his arm, good-by to poetry!"

"Then be a poet now," replied the girl.

"I am a poet," said Benito. "O! Nature-enchanting, etc."

We may confess, however, that in forbidding him to use his gun Minha had imposed on him a genuine privation. There was no lack of game in the woods, and several magnificent opportunities he had declined with regret.

But yet—and he cautioned his sister about this—the gun would go off in spite of him, and probably register a masterstroke in sporting annals, if within range there should come a *tamandoa assa,* a kind of large and very curious ant-eater.

Happily the big ant-eater did not show himself, neither did any panthers, leopards, jaguars, guepars, or conguars, called indifferently ounces in South America, and to whom it is not advisable to get too near.

"After all," said Benito, who stopped for an instant,

"to walk is very well, but to walk without an object——"

"Without an object!" replied his sister; "but our object is to see, to admire, to visit for the last time these forests of Central America, which we shall not find again in Para, and to bid them a last farewell!"

"Ah! an idea!"

It was Lina who spoke.

"An idea of Lina's can be no other than a silly one!" said Benito, shaking his head.

"It is unkind, brother," said Minha, "to make fun of Lina when she has been thinking how to give our walk the object which you have just regretted it lacks."

"Besides, Mr. Benito, I am sure my idea will please you," replied the mulatto.

"Well, what is it?" asked Minha.

"You see that liana?"

And Lina pointed to a liana of the *cipios* kind, twisted round a gigantic sensitive mimosa, whose leaves, light as feathers, shut up at the least disturbance.

"Well?" said Benito.

"I propose," replied Lina, "that we try to follow that liana to its very end."

"It is an idea, and it is an object!" observed Benito, "to follow this liana, no matter what may be the obstacles, thickets, underwood, rocks, brooks, torrents, to let nothing stop us, not even——"

"Certainly, you are right, brother," said Minha; "Lina is absurd."

"Come on, then!" replied her brother; "you say that Lina is absurd so as to say that Benito is absurd to approve of it!"

"Well, both of you are absurd, if that will amuse you," returned Minha. "Let us follow the liana!"

"You are not afraid?" said Manoel.

"Still objections!" shouted Benito.

"Ah, Manoel! you would not speak like that if you were already on your way and Minha was waiting for you at the end."

"I am silent," replied Manoel; "I have no more to say. I obey. Let us follow the liana!"

And off they went as happy as children home for their holidays.

This vegetable might take them far if they determined to follow it to its extremity, like the thread of Ariadne, as far almost as that which the heiress of Minos used to lead her from the labyrinth, and perhaps entangle them more deeply.

It was in fact a creeper of the salses family, one of the cipos known under the name of the red *japicanga,* whose length sometimes measured several miles. But, after all, they could leave it when they liked.

The cipo passed from one tree to another without breaking its continuity, sometimes twisting round the trunks, sometimes garlanding the branches, here jumping from a dragon-tree to a rosewood, then from a gigantic chestnut, to some of the wine palms. Here round *tucumas,* or ficuses, capriciously twisted like centenarian olive-trees; here round the noble palm-trees, with slender, graceful, and glossy stems.

But the halts! the shouts of cheating! when the happy company thought they had lost their guiding thread! For it was necessary to go back and disentangle it from the knot of parasitic plants.

"There it is!" said Lina, "I see it!"

"You are wrong," replied Minha; "that is not it, that is a liana of another kind."

"No, Lina is right!" said Benito.

"No, Lina is wrong!" Manoel would naturally return.

Hence highly serious, long-continued discussions, in which no one would give in. Then the black on one side and Benito on the other would rush at the trees and clamber up to the branches encircled by the cipo so as to arrive at the true direction.

Now nothing was assuredly less easy in that jumble of knots, among which twisted the liana in the middle of bromelias, *karatas,* armed with their sharp prickles, orchids with rosy flowers and violet lips of the size of gloves, and oncidiums more tangled than a skein of worsted between a kitten's paws.

And then when the liana ran down again to the ground the difficulty of picking it out under the mass of lycopods, large-leaved heliconias, rosy-tasseled callindras, rhipsalas encircling it like thread on an electric reel, between the knots of the large white ipomas, under the fleshy stems of the vanilla, and in the midst of the shoots and branchlets

of the grenadilla and the vine. And when the cipo was found again what shouts of joy, and how they resumed the walk for an instant interrupted!

For an hour the young people had already been advancing, and nothing had happened to warn them that they were approaching the end.

They shook the liana with vigor, but it would not give, and the birds flew away in hundreds, and the monkeys fled from tree to tree, so as to point out the way.

If a thicket barred the road the felling-sword cut a deep gap, and the group passed in. If it was a high rock, carpeted with verdure, over which the liana twined like a serpent, they climbed it and passed on.

A large break now appeared. There, in the more open air, which is as necessary to it as the light of the sun, the tree of the tropics, *par excellence,* which, according to Humboldt, "accompanies man in the infancy of his civilization," the great provider of the inhabitant of the torrid zones, a banana-tree, was standing alone. The long festoon of the liana curled round its higher branches, moving away to the other side of the clearing, and disappeared again into the forest.

"Shall we stop soon?" asked Manoel.

"No; a thousand times no!" cried Benito; "not without having reached the end of it!"

"Perhaps," observed Minha, "it will soon be time to think of returning."

"Oh, dearest mistress, let us go on again!" replied Lina.

"On for ever!" added Benito. And they plunged more deeply into the forest, which, becoming clearer, allowed them to advance more easily.

Besides, the cipo bore away to the north, and toward the river. It became less inconvenient to follow seeing that they approached the right bank, and it would be easy to get back afterward.

A quarter of an hour later they all stopped at the foot of a ravine in front of a small tributary of the Amazon. But a bridge of lianas, made of *Bejucos,* twined together by their interlacing branches, crossed the stream. The cipo, dividing into two strings, served for a handrail, and passed from one bank to the other.

Benito, all the time in front, had already stepped on the swinging floor of this vegetable bridge.

Manoel wished to keep his betrothed back. "Stay—stay, Minha!" he said, "Benito may go farther if he likes, but let us remain here."

"No! Come on, come on, dear mistress!" cried Lina. "Don't be afraid, the liana is getting thinner; we shall get the better of it, and find out its end!" And, without hesitation, the young mulatto boldly ventured behind Benito.

"What children they are!" replied Minha. "Come along, Manoel, we must follow." And they all cleared the bridge, which swayed above the ravine like a swing, and plunged again beneath the mighty trees.

But they had not proceeded for ten minutes along the interminable cipo, in the direction of the river, when they stopped, and this time not without cause.

"Have we got to the end of this liana?" asked Minha.

"No," replied Benito; "but we had better advance with care. Look!" and Benito pointed to the cipo which, lost in the branches of a high ficus, was agitated by violent shakings.

"What causes that?" asked Manoel.

"Perhaps some animal that we had better approach with a little circumspection!" And Benito, cocking his gun, motioned them to let him go on a bit, and stepped about ten paces to the front.

Manoel, the two girls, and the black remained motionless where they were.

Suddenly Benito raised a shout, and they saw him rush toward a tree; they all ran as well.

Sight the most unforeseen, and little adapted to gratify the eyes! A man, hanging by the neck, struggled at the end of the liana, which, supple as cord, had formed into a slip-knot, and the shakings came from the jerks into which he still agitated it in the last convulsions of his agony!

Benito threw himself on the unfortunate fellow, and with a cut of his hunting-knife severed the cipo. The man slipped on to the ground. Manoel leaned over him, to try and recall him to life, if it were not too late.

"Poor man!" murmured Minha.

"Mr. Manoel! Mr. Manoel!" cried Lina. "He breathes again! His heart beats; you must save him."

"True," said Manoel, "but I think it was about time that we came up."

He was about thirty years old, a white, clothed badly enough, much emaciated, and he seemed to have suffered a good deal. At his feet was an empty flask, thrown on the ground, and a cup and a ball in palm wood, of which the ball, made of the head of a tortoise, was tied on with a fiber.

"To hang himself! to hang himself!" repeated Lina, "and young still! What could have driven him to do such a thing?"

But the attempts of Manoel had not been long in bringing the luckless wight to life again, and he opened his eyes and gave an "ahem!" so vigorous and unexpected, that Lina, frightened, replied to his cry with another.

"Who are you, my friend!" Benito asked him.

"An ex-hanger-on, as far as I see."

"But your name?"

"Wait a minute and I will recall myself," said he, passing his hand over his forehead. "I am known as Fragoso, at your service; and I am still able to curl and cut your hair, to shave you, and to make you comfortable according to the rules of my art. I am a barber, so to speak more truly, the most desperate of Figaros."

"And what made you think of——"

"What would you have, my gallant, sir?" replied Fragoso, with a smile; "a moment of despair, which I would have duly regretted had the regrets been in another world! But eight hundred leagues of country to traverse, and not a coin in my pouch, was not very comforting! I had lost courage obviously."

To conclude, Fragoso had a good and pleasing figure, and as he recovered it was evident that he was of a lively disposition. He was one of those wandering barbers who travel on the banks of the Upper Amazon, going from village to village, and putting the resources of their art at the service of negroes, negresses, Indians, and Indian women, who appreciate them very much. But poor Fragoso, abandoned and miserable, having eaten nothing for forty hours, astray in the forest, had for an instant lost his head, and we know the rest.

"My friend," said Benito to him, "you will go back with us to the fazenda of Iquitos?"

"With pleasure," replied Fragoso; "you cut me down, and I belong to you. I must somehow be dependent."

"Well, dear mistress, don't you think we did well to continue our walk?" asked Lina.

"That I do!" returned the girl.

"Never mind," said Benito; "I never thought that we should finish by finding a man at the end of the cipo."

"And, above all, a barber in difficulties, and on the road to hang himself!" replied Fragoso.

The poor fellow, who was now wide awake, was told about what had passed. He warmly thanked Lina for the good idea she had had of following the liana, and they all started on the road to the fazenda, where Fragoso was received in a way that gave him neither wish nor want to try his wretched task again.

CHAPTER VIII

THE JANGADA

The half-mile square of forest was cleared. With the carpenters remained the task of arranging in the form of a raft the many venerable trees which were lying on the strand.

And an easy task it was! Under the direction of Joam Garral the Indians displayed their incomparable ingenuity. In everything connected with house-building or ship-building these natives are, it must be admitted, astonishing workmen. They have only an ax and a saw, and they work on woods so hard that the edges of their tools get absolutely jagged; yet they square up trunks, shape beams out of enormous stems, and get out of them joists and planking without the aid of any machinery whatever, and do all these things easily with their skilled and patient hands.

The trees had not been launched into the Amazon to begin with; Joam Garral was accustomed to proceed in a different way. The whole mass of trunks was symmetrically arranged on the flat part of the bank, which he had already leveled up at the junction of the Nanay with the great river.

There it was that the jangada was to be built; thence it

was that the Amazon was to float it when the time came for it to start for its destination.

And here an explanatory note is necessary in regard to the geography of this immense body of water, and more especially as relating to a singular phenomenon which the river-side inhabitants describe from personal observation.

The only two rivers which are, perhaps, more extensive than the great artery of Brazil, the Nile and the Missouri-Mississippi, flow one from south to north across the African continent, the other from north to south through North America. They cross districts of many different latitudes, and consequently of many different climates.

The Amazon, on the contrary, is entirely comprised—at least, it is from the point where it turns to the east, on the frontiers of Ecuador and Peru—between the second and fourth parallels of south latitude. Hence this immense river-system is under the same climatic conditions during the whole of its course.

In these parts there are two distinct seasons during which the rains fall. In the north of Brazil the rainy season is in September; in the south it occurs in March. Consequently the right-hand tributaries and the left-hand tributaries bring down their floods at half-yearly intervals, and hence the level of the Amazon, after reaching its maximum in June, gradually falls until October.

This Joam Garral knew by experience, and he intended to profit by the phenomenon to launch the jangada, after having built it in comfort on the river-bank. In fact, between the mean and the higher level the height of the Amazon could vary as much as forty feet, and between the mean and the lower level as much as thirty feet. A difference of seventy feet like this gave the fazender all he required.

The building was commenced without delay. Along the huge bank the trunks were got in place according to their sizes and floating power, which of course had to be taken into account, as among these thick and heavy woods there were many whose specific gravity was but little below that of water.

The first layer was entirely composed of trunks laid side by side. A little interval had to be left between them, and they were bound together by transverse beams, which assured the solidity of the whole. *Piacaba* ropes strapped

them together as firmly as any chain cables could have done. This material, which consists of the ramicles of a certain palm-tree growing very abundantly on the river-banks, is in universal use in the district. Piacaba floats, resists immersion, and is cheaply made—very good reasons for causing it to be valuable, and making it even an article of commerce with the Old World.

Above this double row of trunks and beams were disposed the joints and planks which formed the floor of the jangada, and rose about thirty inches above the load water-line. The bulk was enormous, as we must confess when it is considered that the raft measured a thousand feet long and sixty broad, and thus had a superficies of sixty thousand square feet. They were, in fact, about to commit a whole forest to the Amazon.

The work of building was conducted under the immediate direction of Joam Garral. But when that part was finished, the question of arrangement was submitted to the discussion of all, including even the gallant Fragoso.

The barber had never been so happy as since the day when he had been received by the hospitable family. Joam Garral had offered to take him to Para, on the road to which he was when the liana, according to his account, had seized him by the neck and brought him up with a round turn. Fragoso had accepted the offer, thanked him from the bottom of his heart, and ever since had sought to make himself useful in a thousand ways. He was a very intelligent fellow—what one might call a "double right-hander"—that is to say, he could do everything, and could do everything well. As merry as Lina, always singing, and always ready with some good-natured joke, he was not long in being liked by all.

But it was with the young mulatto that he claimed to have contracted the heaviest obligation. "A famous idea that of yours, Miss Lina," he was constantly saying, "to play at 'following the liana!' It is a capital game, even if you do not always find a poor chap of a barber at the end!"

"Quite a chance, Mr. Fragoso," would laughingly reply Lina; "I assure you you owe me nothing!"

"What! nothing! I owe you my life, and I want it prolonged for a hundred years, and that my recollection

of the fact may endure even longer! You see it is not my trade to be hanged! If I tried my hand at it, it was through necessity. But, on consideration, I would rather die of hunger, and before quite going off I should try a little pasturage with the brutes! As for this liana, it is a lien between us, and so you will see!"

The conversation generally took a joking turn, but at the bottom Fragoso was very grateful to the mulatto for having taken the initiative in his rescue, and Lina was not insensible to the attentions of the brave fellow, who was as straightforward, frank, and good-looking as she was. Their friendship gave rise to many a pleasant "Ah-ha!" on the part of Benito, old Cybele, and others.

To return to the jangada. After some discussion it was decided, as the voyage was to be of some months' duration, to make it as complete and comfortable as possible. The Garral family, comprising the father, mother, daughter, Benito, Manoel, and the servants, Cybele and Lina, were to live in a separate house. In addition to these, there were to go forty Indians, forty blacks, Fragoso, and the pilot who was to take charge of the navigation of the raft.

Though the crew was large, it was not more than sufficient for the service on board. To work the jangada along the windings of the river and between the hundreds of islands and islets which lay in its course required fully as many as were taken, for if the current furnished the motive power, it had nothing to do with the steering, and the hundred and sixty arms were no more than were necessary to work the long boat-hooks by which the giant raft was to be kept in mid-stream.

In the first place, then, in the hinder part of the jangada they built the master's house. It was arranged to contain several bedrooms and a large dining-hall. One of the rooms was destined for Joam and his wife, another for Lina and Cybele near those of their mistresses, and a third room for Benito and Manoel. Minha had a room away from the others, which was not by any means the least comfortably designed.

This, the principal house, was carefully made of weather-boarding, saturated with boiling resin, and thus rendered water-tight throughout. It was capitally lighted with windows on all sides. In front, the entrance-door gave im-

mediate access to the common room. A light veranda, resting on slender bamboos, protected the exterior from the direct action of the solar rays. The whole was painted a light-ocher color, which reflected the heat instead of absorbing it, and kept down the temperature of the interior.

But when the heavy work, so to speak, had been completed, Minha intervened with, "Father, now your care has enclosed and covered us, you will allow us to arrange our dwelling to please ourselves. The outside belongs to you, the inside to us. Mother and I would like it to be as though our house at the fazenda went with us on the journey, so as to make you fancy that we had never left Iquitos!"

"Do just as you like, Minha," replied Joam Garral, smiling in the sad way he often did.

"That will be nice!"

"I leave everything to your good taste."

"And that will do us honor, father. It ought to, for the sake of the splendid country we are going through—which is yours, by the way, and into which you are to enter after so many years' absence."

"Yes, Minha; yes," replied Joam. "It is rather as if we were returning from exile—voluntary exile! Do your best; I approve beforehand of what you do."

On Minha and Lina, to whom were added of their own free will Manoel on the one side and Fragoso on the other, devolved the care of decorating the inside of the house. With some imagination and a little artistic feeling the result was highly satisfactory

The best furniture of the fazenda naturally found its place within, as after arriving in Para they could easily return it by one of the igariteas. Tables, bamboo, easy-chairs, cane sofas, carved wood shelves, everything that constituted the charming furniture of the tropics, was disposed with taste about the floating house. No one is likely to imagine that the walls remained bare. The boards were hidden beneath hangings of most agreeable variety. On the floors of the rooms were jaguar skins, with wonderful spots, and thick monkey furs of exquisite fleeciness. Light curtains of the russet silk produced by the *suma-uma,* hung from the windows. The beds, enveloped in mosquito curtains, had their pillows, mattresses, and bolsters filled with

that fresh and elastic substance which in the Upper Amazon is yielded by the bombax.

In a few days the interior was completed, and it looked just like the interior of the fazenda. A stationary house under a lovely clump of trees on the borders of some beautiful river! As it descended between the banks of the larger stream it would not be out of keeping with the picturesque landscape which stretched away on each side of it.

We may add that the exterior of the house was no less charming than the interior. From the basement to the roof it was literally covered with foliage. A confused mass of orchids, bromelias, and climbing plants, all in flower, rooted in boxes of excellent soil hidden beneath masses of verdure. What whimsical climbers—ruby red and golden yellow, with variegated clusters and tangled twigs—turned over the brackets, under the ridges, on the rafters of the roof, and across the lintels of the doors! They had brought them wholesale from the woods in the neighborhood of the fazenda. A huge liana bound all the parasites together; several times it made the round of the house, clinging on to every angle, encircling every projection, forking, uniting, it everywhere threw out its irregular branchlets, and allowed not a bit of the house to be seen beneath its enormous clusters of bloom.

As a delicate piece of attention, the author of which can be easily recognized, the end of the cipo spread out before the very window of the young mulatto, as though a long arm was forever holding a bouquet of fresh flowers across the blind.

To sum up, it was as charming as could be; and as Yaquita, her daughter, and Lina were content, we need say no more about it.

"It would not take much to make us plant trees on the jangada," said Benito.

"Oh, trees!" ejaculated Minha.

"Why not?" replied Manoel. "Transported on to this solid platform, with some good soil, I am sure they would do well, and we would have no change of climate to fear for them, as the Amazon flows all the time along the same parallel."

"Besides," said Benito, "every day islets of verdure, torn from the banks, go drifting down the river. Do they not

pass along with their trees, bushes, thickets, rocks, and fields, to lose themselves in the Atlantic eight hundred leagues away? Why, then, should we not transform our raft into a floating garden?"

"Would you like a forest, miss?" said Fragoso, who stopped at nothing.

"Yes, a forest!" cried the young mulatto; "a forest with its birds and its monkeys——"

"Its snakes, its jaguars!" continued Benito.

"Its Indians, its nomadic tribes," added Manoel, "and even its cannibals!"

"But where are you going to, Fragoso?" said Minha, seeing the active barber making a rush at the bank.

"To look after the forest!" replied Fragoso.

"Useless, my friend," answered the smiling Minha. "Manoel has given me a nosegay and I am quite content! It is true," she added, pointing to the house hidden beneath the flowers, "that he has hidden our house in his betrothal bouquet!"

CHAPTER IX

THE EVENING OF THE FIFTH OF JUNE

While the master's house was being constructed, Joam Garral was also busied in the arrangement of the outbuildings, comprising the kitchen, and offices in which provisions of all kinds were intended to be stored.

As for preserved meats, not forgetting a whole flock of sheep, kept in a special stable built in the front, they consisted principally of a quantity of the *presunto* hams of the district, which are of first-class quality; but the guns of the young fellows and of some of the Indians were reckoned on for additional supplies, excellent hunters as they were, to whom there was likely to be no lack of game on the islands and in the forests bordering on the stream. The river was also expected to furnish its daily quota. And so each day shooting and fishing were to be regularly indulged in.

For beverages they had a good store of the best that the country produced; *caysuma* or *machachera,* from the Upper and Lower Amazon, an agreeable liquor of slightly

acidulated taste, which is distilled from the boiled root of the sweet manioc; *beiju,* from Brazil, a sort of national brandy, the *chica* of Peru; the *mazato* of the Ucayali, extracted from the boiled fruits of the banana-tree, pressed and fermented; *guarana,* a kind of paste made from the double almond of the *paullinia-sorbilis,* a genuine tablet of chocolate so far as its color goes, which is reduced into a fine powder, and with the addition of water yields an excellent drink.

And this was not all. There is in these countries a species of dark violet wine, which is got from the juice of the palm, and the aromatic flavor of this *assais* is greatly appreciated by the Brazilians, and of it there were on board a respectable number of frasques (each holding a little more than half a gallon), which would probably be emptied before they arrived at Para.

The principal habitation, with its annexes—kitchen, offices, and cellars—was placed in the rear—or, let us say, stern of the raft—and formed a part reserved for the Garral family and their personal servants.

In the center the huts for the Indians and the blacks had been erected. The staff were thus placed under the same conditions as at the fazenda of Iquitos, and would always be able to work under the direction of the pilot.

To house the crew a good many huts were required, and these gave to the jangada the appearance of a small village got adrift, and, to tell the truth, it was a better built and better peopled village than many of those on the Upper Amazon.

For the Indians Joam Garral had designed regular cabins —huts without walls, with only light poles supporting the roof of foliage. The air circulated freely throughout these open constructions and swung the hammock suspended in the interior, and the natives, among whom were three or four complete families, with women and children, were lodged as if they were on shore.

In the bow regular warehouses had arisen, containing the goods which Joam Garral was carrying to Belem at the same time as the products of his forests. There, in vast storerooms, under the direction of Benito, the rich cargo had been placed with as much order as if it had been carefully stowed away in a ship's hold.

To conclude our description of the jangada, we have only to speak of one or two erections of different kinds, which gave it a picturesque aspect.

In the bow was the cabin of the pilot—we say in the bow, and not at the stern, where the helmsman is generally found. In navigating under such circumstances a rudder is of no use. Long oars have no effect on a raft of such dimensions, even when worked with a hundred sturdy arms. It was from the sides, by means of long boat-hooks or props thrust against the bed of the stream, that the jangada was kept in the current, and had its direction altered when going astray. By this means they could range alongside either bank, if they wished for any reason to come to a halt. Three or four ubas, and two pirogues, with the necessary rigging, were carried on board, and afforded easy communications with the banks. The pilot had to look after the channels of the river, the deviations of the current, and eddies which it was necessary to avoid, the creeks or bays which afforded favorable anchorage, and to do this he had to be in the bow.

If the pilot was the material director of this immense machine—for can we not justly call it so?—another personage was its spiritual director; this was Padre Passanha, who had charge of the mission at Iquitos. A religious family, like that of Joam Garral's, had availed themselves enthusiastically of this occasion of taking him with them.

Padre Passanha, then aged seventy, was a man of great worth, full of evangelical fervor, charitable and good, and in countries where the representatives of religion are not always examples of the virtues, he stood out as the accomplished type of those great missionaries who have done so much for civilization in the interior of the most savage regions of the world.

For fifty years Padre Passanha had lived at Iquitos, in the mission of which he was the chief. He was loved by all, and worthily so. The Garral family held him in great esteem; it was he who had married the daughter of Farmer Magalhaes to the clerk who had been received at the fazenda. He had known the children from birth; he had baptized them, educated them, and hoped to give each of them the nuptial blessing.

The age of the padre did not allow of his exercising the important ministry any longer. The horn of retreat for

him had sounded; he was about to be replaced at Iquitos by a young missionary, and he was preparing to return into Para, to end his days in one of those convents which are reserved for the old servants of God.

What better occasion could offer than that of descending the river with the family which was as his own? They had proposed it to him, and he had accepted, and when arrived at Belem he was to marry the young couple, Minha and Manoel.

But if Padre Passanha, during the course of the voyage, was to take his meals with the family, Joam Garral desired to build for him a dwelling apart, and Heaven knows what care Yaquita and her daughter took to make him comfortable. Assuredly the good old priest had never been so lodged in his modest parsonage!

The parsonage was not enough for Padre Passanha, he ought to have a chapel!

The chapel then was built in the center of the jangada, and a little bell surmounted it. It was small enough, undoubtedly, and it could not hold the whole of the crew, but it was richly decorated, and if Joam Garral found his own house on the raft, Padre Passanha had no cause to regret the poverty-stricken church of Iquitos.

Such was the wonderful structure which was going down the Amazon. It was then on the bank waiting till the flood came to carry it away. From the observation and calculation of the rising it would seem as though there was not much longer to wait.

All was ready to date, the 5th of June.

The pilot arrived the evening before. He was a man about fifty, well up in his profession, but rather fond of drink. Such as he was, Joam Garral in large matters at different times had employed him to take his rafts to Belem, and he had never had cause to repent it.

It is as well to add that Araujo—that was his name—never saw better than when he had imbibed a few glasses of tafia; and he never did any work at all without a certain demijohn of that liquor to which he paid frequent court.

The rise of the flood had clearly manifested itself for several days. From minute to minute the level of the river rose, and during the twenty-four hours which preceded the

maximum the waters covered the bank on which the raft rested, but did not lift the raft.

As soon as the movement was assured and there could be no error as to the height to which the flood would rise, all those interested in the undertaking were seized with no little excitement. For if through some inexplicable cause the waters of the Amazon did not rise sufficiently to flood the jangada, it would all have to be built over again. But as the fall of the river would be very rapid it would take long months before similar conditions recurred.

On the 5th of June, toward the evening, the future passengers of the jangada were collected on a plateau which was about one hundred feet above the bank, and waited for the hour with an anxiety quite intelligible.

There were Yaquita, her daughter, Manoel Valdez, Padre Passanha, Benito, Lina, Fragoso, Cybele, and some of the servants, Indian or negro, of the fazenda.

Fragoso could not keep himself still; he went and he came, he ran down the bank and ran up the plateau, he noted the points of the river gage, and shouted "Hurrah!" as the water crept up.

"It will swim, it will swim!" he shouted. "The raft which is to take us to Belem! It will float if all the cataracts of the sky have to open to flood the Amazon!"

Joam Garral was on the raft with the pilot and some of the crew. It was for him to take all the necessary measures at the critical moment. The jangada was moored to the bank with solid cables, so that it could not be carried away by the current when it floated off.

Quite a tribe of from one hundred and fifty to two hundred Indians, without counting the population of the village, had come to assist at the interesting spectacle. They were all keenly on the watch, and silence reigned over the impressionable crowd.

Toward five o'clock in the evening the water had reached a level higher than that of the night before—by more than a foot—and the bank had already entirely disappeared beneath the liquid covering.

A certain groaning arose among the planks of the enormous structure, but there was still wanting a few inches before it was quite lifted and detached from the ground.

For an hour the groanings increased. The joists grated on all sides. A struggle was going on in which little by little the trunks were being dragged from their sandy bed.

Toward half-past six cries of joy arose. The jangada floated at last, and the current took it toward the middle of the river, but, in obedience to the cables, it quietly took up its position near the bank at the moment that Padre Passanha gave it his blessing, as if it were a vessel launched into the sea whose destinies are in the hands of the Most High!

CHAPTER X

FROM IQUITOS TO PEVAS

On the 6th of June, the very next day, Joam Garral and his people bade good-by to the superintendent, and the Indians and negroes who were to stay behind at the fazenda. At six o'clock in the morning the jangada received all its passengers, or rather inhabitants, and each of them took possession of his cabin, or perhaps we had better say his house.

The moment of departure had come. Araujo, the pilot, got into his place at the bow, and the crew, armed with their long poles, went to their proper quarters.

Joam Garral, assisted by Benito and Manoel, superintended the unmooring. At the command of the pilot the ropes were eased off, and the poles applied to the bank, so as to give the jangada a start. The current was not long in seizing it, and, coasting the left bank, the islands of Iquitos and Parianta were passed to the right.

The voyage had commenced—where would it finish? In Para, at Belem, eight hundred leagues from this little Peruvian village, if nothing happened to modify the route. How would it finish? That was the secret of the future.

The weather was magnificent. A pleasant *pampero* tempered the ardor of the sun—one of those winds which in June or July come from off the Cordilleras, many hundred leagues away, after having swept across the huge plain of the Sacramento. Had the raft been provided with masts and sails, she would have felt the effects of the breeze,

and her speed would have been greater; but owing to the sinuosities of the river and its abrupt changes, which they were bound to follow, they had had to renounce such assistance.

In a flat district like that through which the Amazon flows, which is almost a boundless plain, the gradient of the river-bed is scarcely perceptible. It has been calculated that between Tabatinga on the Brazilian frontier, and the source of this huge body of water, the difference of level does not exceed a decimeter in each league. There is no other river in the world whose inclination is so slight.

It follows from this that the average speed of the current cannot be estimated at more than two leagues in the twenty-four hours, and sometimes, while the droughts are on, it is even less. However, during the period of the floods it has been known to increase to eight leagues or more.

Happily, it was under these latter conditions that the jangada was to proceed; but, cumbrous in its movements, it could not keep up to the speed of the current which ran past it. There are also to be taken into account the stoppages occasioned by the bends of the river, the numerous islands which had to be rounded, the shoals which had to be avoided, and the hours of halting, which were necessarily lost when the night was too dark to advance securely, so that we cannot allow more than fifteen miles for each twenty-four hours.

In addition, the surface of the water is far from being completely clear. Trees still green, vegetable remains, islets of plants constantly torn from the banks, formed quite a flotilla of fragments carried on by the currents, and were so many obstacles to speedy navigation.

The mouth of the Nanay was soon passed, and lost to sight behind a point on the left bank, which, with its carpet of russet grasses tinted by the sun, formed a ruddy relief to the green forests on the horizon.

The jangada took the center of the stream between the numerous picturesque islands, of which there are a dozen between Iquitos and Pulcalppa.

Araujo, who did not forget to clear his vision and his memory by an occasional application to his demijohn, maneuvered very ably when passing through this archipelago. At his word of command fifty poles from each side of the

raft were raised in the air, and struck the water with an automatic movement very curious to behold.

While this was going on, Yaquita, aided by Lina and Cybele, was getting everything in order, and ten Indian cooks were preparing the breakfast.

As for the two young fellows and Minha, they were walking up and down in company with Padre Passanha, and from time to time the lady stopped and watered the plants which were placed about the base of the dwelling-house.

"Well, padre," said Benito, "do you know a more agreeable way of traveling?"

"No, my dear boy," replied the padre; "it is truly traveling with all one's belongings!"

"And without fatigue!" added Manoel; "we might do hundreds of thousands of miles in this way!"

"And," said Minha, "you do not repent having taken passage with us? Does it not seem to you as if we were afloat on an island drifted quietly away on the bed of the river with its prairies and its trees? Only——"

"Only?" repeated the padre.

"Only we have made the island with our hands; it belongs to us, and I prefer it to all the islands of the Amazon! I have a right to be proud of it!"

"Yes, my daughter; and I absolve you from your pride. Besides, I am not allowed to scold you in the presence of Manoel!"

"But, on the other hand," replied she, gayly "you should teach Manoel to scold me when I deserve it. He is a great deal too indulgent to my little self."

"Well, then, dear Minha," said Manoel, "I shall profit by that permission to remind you——"

"Of what?"

"That you were very busy in the library at the fazenda, and that you promised to make me very learned about everything connected with the Upper Amazon. We know very little about it in Para, and here we have been passing several islands and you have not even told me their names!"

"What is the good of that?" said she.

"Yes; what is the good of it?" repeated Benito. "What can be the use of remembering the hundreds of names in the 'Tupi' dialect with which these islands are dressed out? It is enough to know them. The Americans, are much

more practical with their Mississippi islands; they number them——"

"As they number the avenues and streets of their towns," replied Manoel. "Frankly, I don't care much for that numerical system; it conveys nothing to the imagination —Sixty-fourth Island or Sixty-fifth Island, any more than Sixth Street or Third Avenue. Don't you agree with me, Minha?"

"Yes, Manoel; though I am of somewhat the same way of thinking as my brother. But even if we do not know their names, the islands of our great river are truly splendid! See how they rest under the shadows of those gigantic palm-trees with their drooping leaves! And the girdle of reeds which encircles them through which a pirogue can with difficulty make its way! And the mangrove-trees, whose fantastic roots buttress them to the bank like the claws of some gigantic crab! Yes, the islands are beautiful, but, beautiful as they are, they cannot equal the one we have made our own!"

"My little Minha is enthusiastic to-day," said the padre.

"Ah, padre! I am so happy to see everybody happy around me!"

At this moment the voice of Yaquita was heard calling Minha into the house.

The young girl smilingly ran off.

"You will have an amiable companion," said the padre. "All the joy of the house goes away with you, my friend."

"Brave little sister!" said Benito, "we will miss her greatly, and the padre is right. However, if you do not marry her, Manoel—there is still time—she will stay with us."

"She will stay with you, Benito," replied Manoel. "Believe me, I have a presentiment that we shall all be reunited!"

The first day passed capitally; breakfast, dinner, siesta, walks, all took place as if Joam Garral and his people were still in the comfortable fazenda of Iquitos.

During these twenty-four hours the mouths of the rivers Bacali, Chochio, Pucalppa, on the left of the stream, and those of the rivers Itinicari, Maniti, Moyoc, Tucuya, and the islands of this name on the right, were passed without accident. The night, lighted by the moon, allowed them to

save a halt, and the giant raft glided peacefully on along the surface of the Amazon.

A few Indians had wandered to the bank of the river. They were robust in build, of tall stature, with shaggy hair, and had their noses pierced with a rod of palm, and the lobes of their ears lengthened to their shoulders by the weight of heavy rings of precious wood. Some women were with them. None of them showed any intention of coming on board. It is asserted that these natives are cannibals; but if that is true—and it is said of many of the river tribes—there must have been more evidence for the cannibalism than we get to-day.

Then the pilot, so as to follow a better current, which turned off from the bank directed the raft toward the right side of the river, which he had not yet approached. The maneuver was not accomplished without certain difficulties, which were successfully overcome after a good many resorts to the demijohn.

This allowed them to notice in passing some of those numerous lagoons with black waters, which are distributed along the course of the Amazon, and which often have no communication with the river. One of these, bearing the name of the Lagoon of Oran, is of a fair size, and receives the water by a large strait. In the middle of the stream there are scattered several islands and two or three islets curiously grouped; and on the opposite bank Benito recognized the site of the ancient Oran, of which they could only see a few uncertain traces.

During two days the jangada traveled sometimes under the left bank, sometimes under the right, according to the condition of the current, without giving the least sign of grounding.

The passengers had already become used to this new life. Joam Garral leaving to his son everything that referred to the commercial side of the expedition, kept himself principally to his room, thinking and writing. What he was writing about he told to nobody, not even Yaquita, and it seemed to have already assumed the importance of a veritable essay.

Benito, all observation, chatted with the pilot and acted as manager. Yaquita, her daughter, and Manoel, nearly always formed a group apart, discussing their future proj-

ects just as they walked and done in the park of the fazenda. The life was, in fact, the same. Not quite, perhaps, to Benito, who had not yet found occasion to participate in the pleasures of the chase. If, however, the forests of Iquitos failed him with their wild beasts, agoutis, peccaries and cabiais, the birds flew in flocks from the banks of the river and fearlessly perched on the jangada. When they were of such quality as to figure fairly on the table, Benito shot them; and, in the interest of all, his sister raised no objection; but if he came across any gray or yellow herons, or red or white ibises, which haunt the sides, he spared them through love for Minha. One single species of grebe, which is uneatable, found no grace in the eyes of the young merchant: this was the *caiarara,* as quick to dive as to swim or fly; a bird with a disagreeable cry, but whose down bears a high price in the different markets of the Amazonian basin.

At length, after having passed the village of Omaguas and the mouth of the Ambiacu, the jangada arrived at Pevas on the evening of the 11th of June, and was moored to the bank.

As it was to remain here for some hours before nightfall, Benito disembarked, taking with him the ever-ready Fragoso, and the two sportsmen started off to beat the thickets in the environs of the little place. An agouti, not to mention a dozen partridges, enriched the larder after this fortunate excursion. At Pevas, where there is a population of two hundred and sixty inhabitants, Benito would perhaps have done some trade with the lay brothers of the mission, who are at the same time wholesale merchants, but these had just sent away some bales of sarsaparilla and arrobas of caoutchouc toward the Lower Amazon, and their stores were empty.

The jangada departed at daybreak, and passed the little archipelago of the Iatio and Cochiquinas islands, after having left the village of the latter name on the right. Several mouths of smaller unnamed affluents showed themselves on the right of the river through the spaces between the islands.

Many natives, with shaved heads, tattooed cheeks and foreheads, carrying plates of metal in the lobes of their ears, noses, and lower lips, appeared for an instant on the shore. They were armed with arrows and blow tubes, but

made no use of them, and did not even attempt to communicate with the jangada.

CHAPTER XI

FROM PEVAS TO THE FRONTIER

During the few days which followed, nothing occurred worthy of note. The nights were so fine that the long raft went on its way with the stream without even a halt. The two picturesque banks of the river seemed to change like the panoramas of the theaters which unroll from one wing to another. By a kind of optical illusion it appeared as though the craft was motionless between two moving pathways.

Benito had no shooting on the banks, for no halt was made, but game was very advantageously replaced by the results of the fishing. The rich waters of the Amazon were also frequented by many other aquatic animals, which escorted the jangada through its waves for whole hours together.

There were the gigantic fish called *pira-rucus,* ten and twelve feet long, cuirassed with large scales with scarlet borders. Neither did they care to capture many of the graceful dolphins which played about in hundreds, striking with their tails the planks of the raft, gamboling at the bow and stern, and making the water alive with colored reflections and spurts of spray, which the refracted light converted into so many rainbows.

On the 16th of June, the jangada, after fortunately clearing several shallows in approaching the bank, arrived near the large island of San Pablo, and the following evening stopped at the village of Moromoros, which is situated on the left side of the Amazon. Twenty-four hours afterward, passing the mouths of the Atacoari or Cocha—or rather the *furo,* or canal, which communicates with the lake of Cabello-Cocha on the right bank—she put in at the rising ground of the Mission of Cocha. This was the country of the Marahua Indians, whose long floating hair, and mouth surrounded by a kind of fan made of the spines of palm-trees, six inches long, give them a catlike look—their endeavor being, according to Paul Marcoy, to resemble the

tiger, whose boldness, strength and cunning they admire above everything. Several women came with these Marahuas, smoking cigars, but holding the lighted ends in their teeth. All of them, like the king of the Amazonian forests, go about almost naked.

For two days Araujo was very busy. The bed of the river gradually enlarged, but the islands became more numerous, and the current, embarrassed by these obstacles, increased in strength. Great care was necessary in passing between the islands of Cabello-Cocha, Tarapote, and Cacao. Many stoppages had to be made, and occasionally they were obliged to pole off the jaganda, which now and then threatened to run aground. Every one assisted in the work, and it was under these difficult circumstances that, on the evening of the 20th of June, they found themselves at Nuestra-Senora-di-Loreto.

Loreto is the last Peruvian town situated on the left bank of the river before arriving at the Brazilian frontier. It is only a little village, composed of about twenty houses, grouped on a slightly undulating bank, formed of ocherous earth and clay.

It was in 1770 that this mission was founded by the Jesuit missionaries. The Ticuna Indians, who inhabit the territories on the north of the river, are natives with ruddy skins, bushy hair, and striped designs on their faces, making them look like the lacquer on a Chinese table. Both men and women are simply clothed, with cotton bands bound round their thighs and stomachs. They are now not more than two hundred in number; and on the banks of the Atacoari are found the last traces of a nation which was formerly so powerful under its famous chiefs.

At Loreto there also live a few Peruvian soldiers and two or three Portuguese merchants, trading in cotton stuffs, salt fish, and sarsaparilla.

Benito went ashore, to buy, if possible, a few bales of this smilax, which is always so much in demand in the markets of the Amazon. Joam Garral, occupied all the time in the work which gave him not a moment's rest, did not stir. Yaquita, her daughter, and Manoel also remained on board. The mosquitoes of Loreto have a deserved reputation for driving away such visitors as do not care to leave much of their blood with the redoubtable diptera.

Manoel had a few appropriate words to say about the insects, which were not of a nature to encourage an inclination to brave their stings. "They say that all the new species which infest the banks of the Amazon collect at the village of Loreto. I believe it, but do not wish to confirm it. There, Minha, you can take your choice between the gray mosquito, the hairy mosquito, the white-clawed mosquito, the dwarf mosquito, the trumpeter, the little fifer, the urtiquis, the harlequin, the big black and the red of the woods; or rather they may take their choice of you for a little repast, and you will come back hardly recognizable! I fancy these bloodthirsty diptera guard the Brazilian frontier considerably better than the poverty-stricken soldiers we see on the bank."

"But if everything is of use in nature," asked Minha, "what is the use of mosquitoes?"

"They minister to the happiness of entomologists," replied Manoel; "and I should be much embarrassed to find a better explanation."

What Manoel had said of the Loreto mosquitoes was only too true. When Benito had finished his business and returned on board, his face and hands were tattooed with thousands of red points, without counting some chigoes, which, in spite of the leather of his boots, had introduced themselves beneath his toes.

"Let us set off this very instant," said Benito, "or these wretched insects will invade us, and the jangada will become uninhabitable!"

"And we shall take them into Para," said Manoel, "where there are already quite enough for its own needs." And so, in order not to pass even the night near the banks, the jangada pushed off into the stream.

On leaving Loreto the Amazon turned slightly toward the southeast, between the islands of Arava, Cuyari, and Yrucutea. The jangada then glided along the black waters of the Cajaru, as they mingled with the white stream of the Amazon. After having passed this tributary on the left, it peacefully arrived during the evening of the 23d of June alongside the large island of Jahuma.

The setting of the sun on a clear horizon, free from all haze, announced one of those beautiful tropical nights which are unknown in the temperate zones. A light breeze fresh-

ened the air; the moon arose in the constellated depths of the sky, and for several hours took the place of the twilight which is absent from these latitudes. But even during this period the stars shone with unequaled purity. The immense plain seemed to stretch into the infinite like a sea.

At eight o'clock the three first tinklings of the Angelus escaped from the bell of the little chapel. The three tinklings of the second and third verses sounded in their turn, and the salutation was completed in the series of more rapid strokes of the little bell.

However, the family remained sitting under the veranda to breathe the fresh air from the open. It had been so each evening, and while Joam Garral, always silent, was contented to listen, the young people gayly chatted away till bedtime.

"Ah! our splendid river! our magnificent Amazon!" exclaimed the young girl, whose enthusiasm for the immense stream never failed.

"Unequaled river, in very truth!" said Manoel; "and I do not understand all its sublime beauties! We are going down it, however, like Orelanna and La Condamine did so many centuries ago, and I am not at all surprised at their marvelous descriptions."

"A little fabulous," replied Benito.

"Now, brother," said Minha, seriously, "say no evil of our Amazon."

"To remind you that it has its legends, my sister, is to say no ill of it."

"Yes, that is true; and it has some marvelous ones!" replied Minha.

"What legends?" asked Manoel. "I dare avow that they have not yet found their way into Para—or rather that, for my part, I am not acquainted with them."

"What, then, do you learn in the Belem colleges?" laughingly asked Minha.

"I begin to perceive that they teach us nothing," replied Manoel.

"What, sir!" replied Minha, with a pleasant seriousness; "you do not know, among other fables, that an enormous reptile, called the *minhocao,* sometimes visits the Amazon, and that the waters of the river rise or fall according as this serpent plunges in or quits them, so gigantic is he!"

"But have you ever seen this phenomenal minhocao?"

"Alas, no!" replied Lina.

"What a pity!" Fragoso thought it proper to add.

"And the *Mae d'Aqua,*" continued the girl—"that proud and redoubtable woman whose look fascinates and drags beneath the waters of the river the impudent ones who gaze at her!"

"Oh, as for the *Mae d'Aqua,* she exists!" cried the native Lina; "they say that she still walks on the banks, but disappears like a water-sprite as soon as you approach her."

"Very well, Lina," said Benito; "the first time you see her, just let me know."

"So that she may seize you and take you to the bottom of the river? Never, Mr. Benito!"

"She believes it!" shouted Minha.

"There are people who believe in the trunk of Manaos!" said Fragoso, always ready to intervene on behalf of Lina.

"The 'trunk of Manaos?'" asked Manoel. "What about the trunk of Manaos?"

"Mr. Manoel," answered Fragoso, with comic gravity, "it appears that there is—or rather formerly was—a trunk of *turuma,* which every year at the same time descended the Rio Negro, stopping several days at Manaos, and going on into Para, halting at every port, where the natives ornamented it with flags. Arrived at Belem, it came to a halt, turned back on its road, remounted the Amazon to the Rio Negro, and returned to the forest from which it had mysteriously started. One day somebody tried to drag it ashore, but the river arose in anger, and the attempt had to be given up. And, on another occasion, the captain of a ship harpooned it, and tried to tow it along. This time again the river, in anger, broke off the ropes, and the trunk mysteriously escaped."

"What became of it?" asked the mulatto.

"It appears that on its last voyage, Miss Lina," replied Fragoso, "it mistook the way, and instead of going up the Negro it continued in the Amazon, and it has never been seen again."

"Oh, if we could only meet it!" said Lina.

"If we meet it," answered Benito, "we will put you on it! It will take you back to the mysterious forest, and

you will likewise pass into the state of a legendary naiad!"

"And why not?" asked the mulatto.

"So much for your legends," said Manoel; "and I think your river is worthy of them. But it has also its histories, which are worth something more. I know one, and if I were not afraid of grieving you—for it is a very sad one—I would relate it."

"Oh! tell it, by all means, Mr. Manoel," exclaimed Lina; "I like stories which make you cry!"

"What, do you cry, Lina?" said Benito.

"Yes, Mr. Benito; but I cry when laughing."

"Oh, well! let us have it, Manoel!"

"It is the history of a Frenchwoman whose sorrows rendered these banks memorable in the eighteenth century."

"We are listening," said Minha.

"Here goes, then," said Manoel. "In 1741, at the time of the expedition of the two Frenchmen, Bouguer, and La Condamine, who were sent to measure a terrestrial degree on the Equator, they were accompanied by a very distinguished astronomer, Godin des Odonais. Godin des Odonais set out then, but he did not set out alone for the New World; he took with him his young wife, his children, his father-in-law, and his brother-in-law. The travelers arrived at Quito in good health. There there commenced a series of misfortunes for Madame Odonais; she lost some of her children. When Godin des Odonais had completed his work, toward the end of the year 1759, he left Quito and started for Cayenne. Once arrived in this town he wanted his family to come to him, but war had been declared, and he was obliged to ask the Portuguese Government for permission for a free passage for Madame Odonais and her people. What do you think? Many years passed before the permission could be given. In 1765 Godin des Odonais, maddened by the delay, resolved to ascend the Amazon in search of his wife at Quito; but at the moment of his departure a sudden illness stopped him, and he could not carry out his intention. However, his application had not been useless, and Madame des Odonais learned at last that the King of Portugal had given the necessary permission, and prepared to embark and descend the river to her husband. At the same time an escort was ordered to be

ready in the missions of the Upper Amazon. Madame des Odonais was a woman of great courage, as you will see presently; she never hesitated, and notwithstanding the dangers of such a voyage across the Continent, she started."

"It was her duty to her husband, Manoel," said Yaquita, "and I would have done the same."

"Madame des Odonais," continued Manoel, "came to Rio Bamba, at the south of Quito, bringing her brother-in-law, her children, and a French doctor. Their endeavor was to reach the missions on the Brazilian frontier, where they hoped to find a ship and the escort. The voyage was at first favorable; it was made down the tributaries of the Amazon in a canoe. The difficulties, however, gradually increased with the dangers and fatigues in a country decimated by the smallpox. Of several guides who offered their services, the most part disappeared after a few days; one of them, the last who remained faithful to the travelers, was drowned in the Bobonasa, in endeavoring to help the French doctor. At length the canoe, damaged by rocks and floating trees, became useless. It was therefore necessary to get on shore, and there, at the end of the impenetrable forest, they built a few huts of foliage. The doctor offered to go on in front with a negro who had never wished to leave Madame des Odonais. The two went off; they waited for them several days, but in vain. They never returned.

"In the meantime the victuals were getting exhausted. The forsaken ones in vain endeavored to descend the Bobonasa on a raft. They had to again take to the forest, and make their way on foot through the almost impenetrable undergrowth. The fatigues were too much for the poor folks! They died off one by one in spite of the cares of the noble Frenchwoman. At the end of a few days children, relations, and servants, all were dead!"

"What an unfortunate woman!" said Lina.

"Madame des Odonais alone remained," continued Manoel. "There she was, at a thousand leagues from the ocean which she was trying to reach! It was no longer a mother who continued her journey toward the river—the mother had lost her children; she had buried them with her own hands! It was a wife who wished to see her husband once again! She traveled night and day, and at length regained the Bobonasa. She was there received by some kind-

hearted Indians, who took her to the missions, where the escort was waiting. But she arrived alone, and behind her the stages of the route were marked with graves! Madame des Odonais reached Loreto, where we were a few days back. From this Peruvian village she descended the Amazon, as we are doing at this moment, and at length she rejoined her husband, after a separation of nineteen years."

"Poor lady!" said Minha.

"Above all, poor mother!" answered Yaquita.

At this moment Araujo, the pilot, came aft and said:

"Joam Garral, we are off the Ronde Island. We are passing the frontier!"

"The frontier!" replied Joam. And rising, he went to the side of the jangada, and looked long and earnestly at the Ronde Island, with the waves breaking up against it. Then his hand sought his forehead, as if to rid himself of some remembrance.

"The frontier!" murmured he, bowing his head by an involuntary movement. But an instant after his head was raised, and his expression was that of a man resolved to do his duty to the last.

CHAPTER XII

FRAGOSO AT WORK

"Braza" (burning embers) is a word found in the Spanish language as far back as the twelfth century. It has been used to make the word "brazil," as descriptive of certain woods which yield a reddish dye. From this has come the name "Brazil," given to that vast district of South America which is crossed by the Equator, and in which these products are so frequently met with. In very early days these woods were the object of considerable trade. Although correctly called *ibirapitunga,* from the place of production, the name of "brazil" stuck to them, and it has become that of the country, which seems like an immense heap of embers lighted by the rays of the tropical sun.

Brazil was from the first occupied by the Portuguese. About the commencement of the sixteenth century, Alvarez Cabral, the pilot, took possession of it, and although France and Holland partially established themselves there, it has

remained Portuguese, and possesses all the qualities which distinguish that gallant little nation. It is to-day the largest state of South America.

"What is your privilege in the tribe?" asked Montaigne, of an Indian whom he met at Havre.

"The privilege of marching first to battle!" innocently answered the Indian.

War, we know, was for a long time the surest and most rapid vehicle of civilization. The Brazilians did what this Indian did; they fought, they defended their conquests, they enlarged them, and we see them marching in the first rank of the civilizing advance.

It was in 1824, sixteen years after the foundation of the Portugo-Brazilian Empire, that Brazil proclaimed its independence by the voice of Don Juan, whom the French armies had chased from Portugal.

It remained to define the frontier between the new empire and that of its neighbor, Peru. This was no easy matter. If Brazil wished to extend to the Rio Napo in the west, Peru attempted to reach eight degrees farther, as far as the Lake of Ega.

In the meantime Brazil had to interfere to hinder the kidnapping of Indians from the Amazon, a practice which was engaged in much to the profit of the Hispano-Brazilian Missions. There was no better method of checking this trade than that of fortifying the Island of the Ronde, a little above Tabatinga, and there establishing a post. This afforded the solution, and from that time the frontier of the two countries passed through the middle of this island.

Above, the river is Peruvian, and is called the Maranon, as has been said. Below, it is Brazilian, and takes the name of the Amazon.

It was on the evening of the 25th of June that the jangada stopped before Tabatinga, the first Brazilian town situated on the left bank at the entrance of the river of which it bears the name, and belonging to the parish of St. Paul, established on the right a little farther down the stream.

Joam Garral had decided to pass six-and-thirty hours here, so as to give a little rest to the crew. They would not start, therefore, until the morning of the 27th.

On this occasion Yaquita and her children, less likely,

perhaps, than at Iquitos to be fed upon by the native mosquitoes, had announced their intention of going on shore and visiting the town.

The population of Tabatinga is estimated at four hundred, nearly all Indians, comprising, no doubt, many of those wandering families who are never settled at particular spots on the banks of the Amazon or its smaller tributaries.

The post at the Island of the Ronde has been abandoned for some years, and transferred to Tabatinga. It can thus be called a garrison town, but the garrison is only composed of nine soldiers, nearly all Indians, and a sergeant, who is the actual commandant of the place.

A bank about thirty feet high, in which are cut the steps of a not very solid staircase, forms here the curtain of the esplanade which carries the pygmy fort. The house of the commandant consists of a couple of huts placed in a square, and the soldiers occupy an oblong building a hundred feet away, at the foot of a large tree.

The collection of cabins exactly resembles all the villages and hamlets, which are scattered along the banks of the river, although in them a flagstaff carrying the Brazilian colors does not rise above a sentry-box forever destitute of its sentinel, nor are four small mortars present to cannonade on an emergency any vessel which does not come in when ordered.

The river is very beautiful along this part of its course. The influence of ordinary tides is not perceptible at Tabatinga, which is more than six hundred leagues from the Atlantic. But it is not so with the *pororoca,* that species of eddy, which for three days in the height of the syzygies raises the waters of the Amazon, and turns them back at the rate of seventeen kilometers per hour. They say that the effects of this bore are felt up to the Brazilian frontier.

On the morrow, the 26th of June, the Garral family prepared to go off and visit the village. Though Joam, Benito, and Manoel had already set foot in a Brazilian town, it was otherwise with Yaquita and her daughter; for them it was, so to speak, a taking possession. It is conceivable, therefore, that Yaquita and Minha should attach some importance to the event.

If, on his part, Fragoso, in his capacity of wandering

barber, had already run through the different provinces of Central America, Lina, like her young mistress, had never been on Brazilian soil.

But before leaving the jangada Fragoso had sought Joam Garral, and had the following conversation: "Mr. Garral," said he, "from the day when you received me at the fazenda of Iquitos, lodged, clothed, fed—in a word, took me in so hospitably—I have owed you——"

"You owe me absolutely nothing, my friend," answered Joam, "so do not insist——"

"Oh, do not be alarmed!" exclaimed Fragoso, "I am not going to pay it off! Let me add, that you took me on board the jangada and gave me the means of descending the river. But here we are, on the soil of Brazil, which, according to all probability, I ought never to have seen again. Without that liana——"

"It is to Lina, and Lina alone, that you should tender your thanks," said Joam.

"I know," said Fragoso, "and I will never forget what I owe her, any more than what I owe you."

"They tell me, Fragoso," continued Joam, "that you are going to say good-by, and intend to remain at Tabatinga."

"By no means, Mr. Garral, since you have allowed me to accompany you to Belem, where I hope at the least to be able to resume my old trade."

"Well, if that is your intention—what were you going to ask me?"

"I was going to ask if you saw any inconvenience in my working at my profession on our route. There is no necessity for my hand to rust; and, besides, a few handfuls of reis would not be so bad at the bottom of my pocket, more particularly if I had earned them. You know, Mr. Garral, that a barber who is also a hairdresser—and I hardly like to say a doctor, out of respect of Mr. Manoel—always finds customers in these Upper Amazon villages."

"Particularly among the Brazilians," answered Joam. "As for the natives——"

"I beg pardon," replied Fragoso, "particularly among the natives. Ah! although there is no beard to trim—for nature has been very stingy toward them in that way—there are always some heads of hair to be dressed in the latest fashion. They are very fond of it, these savages,

both the men and the women! I shall not be installed ten minutes in the square at Tabatinga, with my cup and ball in hand—the cup and ball I have brought on board, and which I can manage with pretty pleasantly—before a circle of braves and squaws will have formed around me. They will struggle for my favors. I could remain here for a month, and the whole tribe of the Ticunas would come to me to have their hair looked after! They won't hesitate to make the acquaintance of 'curling tongs'—that is what they will call me—if I revisit the walls of Tabatinga! I have already had two tries here, and my scissors and comb have done marvels! It does not do to return too often on the same track. The Indian ladies don't have their hair curled every day, like the beauties of our Brazilian cities. No; when it is done, it is done for a year, and during the twelve-month they will take every care not to endanger the edifice which I have raised—with what talent I dare not say. Now it is nearly a year since I was at Tabatinga; I go to find my monuments in ruin! And if it is not objectionable to you, Mr. Garral, I would render myself again worthy of the reputation which I have acquired in these parts, the question of reis, and not that of conceit, being, you understand, the principal."

"Go on, then, friend," replied Joam Garral, laughingly; "but be quick! we can only remain a day at Tabatinga, and we shall start to-morrow at dawn."

"I will not lose a minute," answered Fragoso—"just time to take the tools of my profession, and I am off!"

"Off you go, Fragoso!" said Joam, "and may the reis rain in your pocket!"

"Yes; and that is a proper sort of rain, and there can never be too much of it for your obedient servant."

And so saying, Fragoso rapidly moved away.

A moment afterward the family, with the exception of Joam, went ashore. The jangada was able to approach near enough to the bank for the landing to take place without trouble. A staircase, in a miserable state, cut in the cliff, allowed the visitors to arrive on the crest of the plateau.

Yaquita and her party were received by the commandant of the fort, a poor fellow, who, however, knew the laws of hospitality, and offered them some breakfast in his cottage. Here and there passed and repassed several soldiers on

guard, while on the threshold of the barrack appeared a few children, with their mothers of Ticuna blood, affording very poor specimens of the mixed race.

In place of accepting the breakfast of the sergeant, Yaquita invited the commandant and his wife to come and have theirs on board the jangada.

The commandant did not wait for a second invitation, and an appointment was made for eleven o'clock. In the meantime Yaquita, her daughter, and the young mulatto, accompanied by Manoel, went for a walk in the neighborhood, leaving Benito to settle with the commandant about the tolls—he being chief of the custom house as well as of the military establishment.

That done, Benito, as was his wont, strolled off with his gun into the adjoining woods. On this occasion Manoel had declined to accompany him. Fragoso had left the jangada, but instead of mounting to the fort he had made for the village, crossing the ravine which led off from the right on the level of the bank. He reckoned more on the native custom of Tabatinga than on that of the garrison. Doubtless the soldiers' wives would not have wished better than to have been put under his hands, but the husbands scarcely cared to part with a few reis for the sake of gratifying the whims of their coquettish partners.

Among the natives it was quite the reverse. Husbands and wives, the jolly barber knew them well, and he knew they would give him a better reception.

Behold, then, Fragoso on the road, coming up the shady lane beneath the ficuses, and arriving in the central square of Tabatinga!

As soon as he set foot in the place the famous barber was signaled, recognized, surrounded. Fragoso had no big box, nor drum, nor cornet to attract the attention of his clients—not even a carriage of shining copper, with resplendent lamps and ornamented glass panels, nor a huge parasol, nor anything whatever to impress the public, as they generally have at fairs. No; but Fragoso had his cup and ball, and how that cup and ball were manipulated between his fingers! With what address did he receive the turtle's head, which did for the ball, on the pointed end of the stick! With what grace did he make the ball describe some learned curve of which mathematicians have

not yet calculated the value—even those who have determined the wondrous curve of "the dog who follows his master!"

Every native was there—men, women, the old and the young, in their nearly primitive costume, looking on with all their eyes, listening with all their ears. The smiling entertainer, half in Portuguese, half in Ticunian, favored them with his customary oration in a tone of the most rollicking good-humor. What he said was what is said by all the charlatans who place their services at the public disposal, whether they be Spanish Figaros or French perruquiers. At the bottom the same self-possession, the same knowledge of human weakness, the same description of threadbare witticisms, the same amusing dexterity, and, on the part of the natives, the same wide-mouth astonishment, the same curiosity, the same credulity as the simple folk of the civilized world.

It followed, then, that ten minutes later the public were completely won, and crowded round Fragoso, who was installed in a *loja* of the place, a sort of serving-bar to the inn.

This loja belonged to a Brazilian settled at Tabatinga.

There, for a few vatems, which are the sols of the country, and worth about twenty reis, or half a dozen centimes each, the natives could get drinks of the crudest, and particularly assai, a liquor half solid, half liquid, made of the fruits of the palm-tree, and drunk from a *coui,* or half-calabash, in general use in this district of the Amazon.

And then men and women, with equal eagerness, took their places on the barber's stool. The scissors of Fragoso had little to do, for it was not a question of cutting the wealthy heads of hair, nearly all remarkable for their softness and their quality, but the use to which he could put his comb and the tongs, which were kept warming in the corner in a brazier.

And then the encouragements of the artist to the crowd! "Look here! look here!" said he; "how will that do, my friends—if you don't sleep on the top of it! There you are, for a twelvemonth! and these are the latest novelties from Belem and Rio de Janeiro! The Queen's maids of honor are not more cleverly decked out; and observe, I am not stingy with the pomade!"

No, he was not stingy with it. True, it was only a little grease, with which he had mixed some of the juices of a few flowers, but he plastered it on like cement!

And as to the names of the capillary edifices——for the monuments reared by the hands of Fragoso were of every order of architecture—buckles, rings, clubs, tresses, crimpings, rolls, corkscrews, curls, everything found there a place. Nothing false; no towers, no chignons, no shams! These heads were not enfeebled by cuttings nor thinned by fallings-off, but were forests in all their native virginity! Fragoso, however, was not above adding a few natural flowers, two or three long fish-bones, and some fine bones or copper ornaments, which were brought him by the dandies of the district. Assuredly, the exquisites of the Directory would have envied the arrangement of these high-art coiffures, three and four stories high, and the great Leonard himself would have bowed before his transatlantic rival.

And then the vatems, the handfuls of reis—the only coins for which the natives of the Amazon exchange their goods—which rained into the pocket of Fragoso, and which he collected with evident satisfaction. But assuredly night would come before he could satisfy the demands of the customers, who were so constantly renewed. It was not only the population of Tabatinga, which crowded to the door of the loja. The news of the arrival of Fragoso was not slow to get abroad; natives came to him from all sides; Ticunas from the left bank of the river, Mayorunas from the right bank, as well as those who live on the Cajuru and those who come from the villages of the Javary.

A long array of anxious ones formed itself in the square. The happy ones coming from the hands of Fragoso went proudly from one house to another, showed themselves off, without daring to shake themselves, like the big children that they were.

It thus happened that when noon came the much-occupied barber had not had time to return on board, but had had to content himself with a little assai, some manioc flour, and turtle eggs, which he rapidly devoured between two applications of the curling-tongs.

But it was a great harvest for the innkeeper, as all the operations could not be conducted without a large absorption of liquors drawn from the cellars of the inn. In fact,

it was an event for the town of Tabatinga, this visit of the celebrated Fragoso, barber ordinary and extraordinary to the tribes of the Upper Amazon!

CHAPTER XIII

TORRES

At five o'clock in the evening Fragoso was still there, and was asking himself if he would have to pass the night on the spot to satisfy the expectant crowd, when a stranger arrived in the square, and seeing all this native gathering, advanced toward the inn.

For some minutes the stranger eyed Fragoso attentively with some circumspection. The examination was obviously satisfactory, for he entered the loja.

He was a man about thirty-five years of age. He was dressed in a somewhat elegant traveling-costume, which added much to his personal appearance. But his strong black beard, which the scissors had not touched for some time, and his hair, a trifle long, imperiously required the good offices of a barber.

"Good-day, friend, good-day!" said he, lightly striking Fragoso on the shoulder.

Fragoso turned round when he heard the words pronounced in pure Brazilian, and not in the mixed idiom of the natives.

"A compatriot?" he asked, without stopping the twisting of the refractory mouth of a Mayouma head.

"Yes," answered the stranger. "A compatriot who has need of your services."

"To be sure! In a minute," said Fragoso. "Wait till I have finished with this lady!"

And this was done in a couple of strokes with the curling-tongs.

Although he was the last comer, and had no right to the vacant place, he sat down on the stool without causing any expostulation on the part of the natives who lost a turn.

Fragoso put down the irons for the scissors, and after the manner of his brethren, said:

"What can I do for you, sir?"

"Cut my beard and my hair," answered the stranger.

"All right!" said Fragoso, inserting his comb into the mass of hair.

And then the scissors to do their work.

"And you come from far?" asked Fragoso, who could not work without a good deal to say.

"I have come from the neighborhood of Iquitos."

"So have I!" exclaimed Fragoso. "I have come down the Amazon from Iquitos to Tabatinga. May I ask your name?"

"No objection at all," replied the stranger. "My name is Torres."

When the hair was cut in the latest style Fragoso began to thin his beard, but at this moment, as he was looking straight into his face, he stopped, then began again, and then——

"Eh! Mr. Torres," said he; "I seem to know you. We must have seen each other somewhere?"

"I do not think so," quickly answered Torres.

"I am always wrong!" replied Fragoso, and he hurried on to finish his task.

A moment after Torres continued the conversation which this question of Fragoso had interrupted, with, "How did you come from Iquitos?"

"On board a raft, on which I was given a passage by a worthy fazender who is going down the Amazon with his family."

"A friend, indeed!" replied Torres. "That is a chance, and if your fazender would take me——"

"Do you intend, then, to go down the river?"

"Precisely."

"Into Para?"

"No, only to Manaos, where I have business."

"Well, my host is very kind, and I think he would cheerfully oblige you."

"Do you think so?"

"I might almost say I am sure."

"And what is the name of this fazender?" asked Torres, carelessly.

"Joam Garral," answered Fragoso. And at the same time he muttered to himself, "I certainly have seen this fellow somewhere!"

Torres was not the man to allow a conversation to drop which was likely to interest him, and for very good reasons.

"And so you think Joam Garral would give me a passage?"

"I do not doubt it," replied Fragoso. "What he would do for a poor chap like me, he would not refuse to do for a compatriot like you."

"Is he alone on board the jangada?"

"No," replied Fragoso. "I was going to tell you that he is traveling with his family—and jolly people they are, I assure you. He is accompanied by a crew of Indians and negroes, who form part of the staff at the fazenda."

"Is he rich?"

"Oh, certainly!" answered Fragoso—"very rich. Even the timber which forms the jangada, and the cargo it carries, constitute a fortune!"

"Then Joam Garral and his whole family have just passed the Brazilian frontier?"

"Yes," said Fragoso; "his wife, his son, his daughter, and Miss Minha's betrothed."

"Ah! he has a daughter?" said Torres.

"A charming girl!"

"Going to get married?"

"Yes, to a brave young fellow," replied Fragoso—"an army surgeon in garrison at Belem, and the wedding is to take place as soon as we get to the end of the voyage."

"Good!" said the smiling Torres; "it is what you might call a betrothal journey."

"A voyage of betrothal, of pleasure, and of business!" said Fragoso. "Madame Yaquita and her daughter have never set foot on Brazilian ground; and as for Joam Garral, it is the first time he has crossed the frontier since he went to the farm of old Magalhaes."

"I suppose," asked Torres, "that there are some servants with the family?"

"Of course," replied Fragoso—"old Cybele, on the farm for the last fifty years, and a pretty mulatto, Miss Lina, who is more of a companion than a servant to her mistress. Ah, what an amiable disposition! What a heart, and what eyes! And the ideas she has about everything, particularly about lianas—" Fragoso, started on this subject, would not have been able to stop himself, and Lina would have been

the object of a good many enthusiastic declarations, had Torres not quitted the chair for another customer.

"What do I owe you?" asked he of the barber.

"Nothing," answered Fragoso. "Between compatriots, when they meet on the frontier, there can be no question of that sort."

"But," replied Torres, "I want to——"

"Very well, we will settle that later on, on board the jangada."

"But I do not know that, and I do not like to ask Joam Garral to allow me——"

"Do not hesitate!" exclaimed Fragoso; "I will speak to him if you will like it better, and he will be very happy to be of use to you under the circumstances."

At that instant Manoel and Benito, coming into the town after dinner, appeared at the door of the loja, wishing to see Fragoso at work.

Torres turned toward them and suddenly said: "There are two gentlemen I know—or rather I remember."

"You remember them?" asked Fragoso, surprised.

"Yes, undoubtedly! A month ago, in the forest of Iquitos, they got me out of a considerable difficulty."

"But they are Benito Garral and Manoel Valdez."

"I know. They told me their names, but I never expected to see them here."

Torres advanced toward the two young men, who looked at him without recognizing him.

"You do not remember me, gentlemen?" he asked.

"Wait a little," answered Benito; "Mr. Torres, if I remember aright; it was you who, in the forest of Iquitos, got into difficulties with a guariba?"

"Quite true, gentlemen," replied Torres. "For six weeks I have been traveling down the Amazon, and I just crossed the frontier at the same time as you have."

"Very pleased to see you again," said Benito; "but you have not forgotten that you promised to come to the fazenda of my father?"

"I have not forgotten it," answered Torres.

"And you would have done better to have accepted my offer; it would have allowed you to have waited for our departure, rested from your fatigues, and descended with us to the frontier; so many days of walking saved."

"To be sure!" answered Torres.

"Our compatriot is not going to stop at the frontier," said Fragoso, "he is going on to Manaos."

"Well, then," replied Benito, "if you will come on board the jangada you will be well received, and I am sure my father will give you a passage."

"Willingly," said Torres; "and you will allow me to thank you in advance."

Manoel took no part in the conversation; he let Benito make the offer of his services, and attentively watched Torres, whose face he scarcely remembered. There was an entire want of frankness in the eyes, whose look changed unceasingly, as if he was afraid to fix them anywhere. But Manoel kept this impression to himself, not wishing to injure a compatriot whom they were about to oblige.

"Gentlemen," said Torres, "if you like, I am ready to follow you to the landing-place."

"Come, then," answered Benito.

A quarter of an hour afterward Torres was on board the jangada. Benito introduced him to Joam Garral, acquainting him with the circumstances under which they had previously met him, and asked him to give him a passage down to Manaos.

"I am happy, sir, to be able to oblige you," replied Joam.

"Thank you," said Torres, who at that moment of putting forth his hand kept it back in spite of himself.

"We shall be off at daybreak to-morrow," added Joam Garral, "so you had better get your things on board."

"Oh, that will not take me long!" answered Torres, "there is only myself and nothing else!"

"Make yourself at home," said Joam Garral.

That evening Torres took possession of a cabin near to that of the barber. It was not till eight o'clock that the latter returned to the raft, and gave the young mulatto an account of his exploits, and repeated, with no little vanity, that the renown of the illustrious Fragoso was increasing in the basin of the Upper Amazon.

CHAPTER XIV
STILL DESCENDING

At daybreak on the morrow, the 27th of June, the cables were cast off, and the raft continued its journey down the river.

An extra passenger was on board. Whence came this Torres? No one exactly knew. Where was he going to? "To Manaos," he said. Torres was careful to let no suspicion of his past life escape him, nor of the profession that he had followed till within the last two months, and no one would have thought that the jangada had given refuge to an old captain of the woods. Joam Garral did not wish to mar the service he was rendering by questions of too pressing a nature.

In taking him on board the fazender had obeyed a sentiment of humanity. In the midst of these vast Amazonian deserts, more especially at the time when the steamers had not begun to furrow the waters, it was very difficult to find means of safe and rapid transit. Boats did not ply regularly, and in most cases the traveler was obliged to walk across the forests. This was what Torres had done, and what he must have continued to do, and it was for him good luck to have got a passage on the raft.

From the moment that Benito had explained under what conditions he had met Torres the introduction was complete, and he was able to consider himself as a passenger on an Atlantic steamer, who is free to take part in the general life if he cares, or free to keep himself a little apart if of an unsociable disposition.

It was noticed, at least during the first few days, that Torres did not try to become intimate with the Garral family. He maintained a good deal of reserve, answering if addressed, but never provoking a reply.

If he appeared more open with any one, it was with Fragoso. Did he not owe to this gay companion the idea of taking passage on board the raft? Many times he asked him about the position of the Garrals at Iquitos, the sentiments of the daughter for Manoel Valdez, and always discreetly. Generally, when he was not walking alone in the bow of the jangada, he kept to his cabin.

He breakfasted and dined with Joam Garral and his fam-

ily, but he took little part in their conversation, and retired when the repast was finished.

During the morning the raft passed by the picturesque group of islands situated in the vast estuary of the Javary. This important affluent of the Amazon comes from the southwest, and from source to mouth has not a single island, nor a single rapid, to check its course. The mouth is about three thousand feet in width. The river comes in some miles above the site formerly occupied by the town of the same name, whose possession was disputed for so long by Spaniards and Portuguese.

On the 22d of July, in the morning, the jangada arrived at the foot of San Pablo d'Olivenca, after having floated through the midst of numerous islands which, in all seasons, are clad with verdure and shaded with magnificent trees, and the chief of which bear the names of Jurupari, Rita, Maracanatena, and Cururu Sapo. Many times they passed by the mouths of *iguarapes,* or little affluents, with black waters.

The coloration of these waters is a very curious phenomenon. It is peculiar to a certain number of these tributaries of the Amazon, which differ greatly in importance.

Manoel remarked how thick the cloudiness was, for it could be clearly seen on the surface of the whitish waters of the river.

"They have tried to explain this coloring in many ways," said he, "but I do not think the most learned have yet arrived at a satisfactory explanation."

"The waters are really black with a magnificent reflection of gold," replied Minha, showing a light reddish-brown cloth, which was floating level with the jangada.

"Yes," said Manoel, "and Humboldt has already observed the curious reflection that you have; but on looking at it attentively you will see that it is rather the color of sepia which pervades the whole."

"Good!" exclaimed Benito. "Another phenomenon on which the *savants* are not agreed."

"Perhaps," said Fragoso, "they might ask the opinion of the caymans, dolphins, and manatees, for they certainly prefer the black waters to the others to enjoy themselves in."

"They are particularly attractive to those animals," replied Manoel, "but why it is rather embarrassing to say.

For instance, is the coloration due to the hydro-carbons which the waters hold in solution, or is it because they flow through districts of peat, coal and anthracite; or should we not rather attribute it to the enormous quantity of minute plants which they bear along? There is nothing certain in the matter. Under any circumstances, they are excellent to drink, of a freshness quite enviable for the climate, and without after-taste, and perfectly harmless. Take a little of the water, Minha, and drink it; you will find it all right."

The water is in truth limpid and fresh, and would advantageously replace many of the table-waters used in Europe. They drew several *frasques* for kitchen use.

It has been said that in the morning of the 2d of July the jangada had arrived at San Pablo d'Olivenca, where they turn out in thousands those long strings of beads which are made from the scales of the *coco de piassaba*. This trade is here extensively followed. It may, perhaps, seem singular that the ancient lords of the country, Tupinambas and Tupiniquis, should find their principal occupation in making objects for the Catholic religion. But after all, why not? These Indians are no longer the Indians of days gone by. Instead of being clothed in the national fashion, with a frontlet of macaw feathers, bow and blow-tube, have they not adopted the American costume of white cotton trousers, and a cotton poncho woven by their wives, who have become thorough adepts in its manufacture?

San Pablo d'Olivenca, a town of some importance, has not less than two thousand inhabitants, derived from all the neighboring tribes. At present the capital of the Upper Amazon, it began as a simple Mission, founded by the Portuguese Carmelites about 1692, and afterward acquired by the Jesuit missionaries.

From the beginning it has been in the country of the Omaguas, whose name means "flat-heads," and is derived from the barbarous custom of the native mothers of squeezing the heads of their new-born children between two plates, so as to give them an oblong skull, which was then the fashion. Like everything else, that has changed; heads have retaken their natural form, and there is not the slightest trace of the ancient deformity in the skulls of the chaplet-makers.

Every one, with the exception of Joam Garral, went ashore. Torres also remained on board, and showed no desire to visit San Pablo d'Olivenca, which he did not, however, seem to be acquainted with.

Assuredly if the adventurer was taciturn he was not inquisitive.

Benito had no difficulty in doing a little bartering, and adding slightly to the cargo of the jangada. He and the family received an excellent reception from the principal authorities of the town, the commandant of the place, and the chief of the custom-house, whose functions did not in the least prevent them from engaging in trade. They even intrusted the young merchant with a few products of the country for him to dispose of on their account at Manaos and Belem.

The commandant, his lieutenant, and the head of the police, accepted an invitation to dine with the family, and they were received by Joam Garral with the respect due to their rank.

During dinner Torres showed himself more talkative than usual. He spoke about some of his excursions into the interior of Brazil like a man who knew the country. But in speaking of these travels Torres did not neglect to ask the commandant if he knew Manaos, if his colleague would be there at this time, and if the judge, the first magistrate of the province, was accustomed to absent himself at this period of the hot season. It seemed that in putting this series of questions Torres looked at Joam Garral. It was marked enough for even Benito to notice it, not without surprise, and he observed that his father gave particular attention to the questions so curiously propounded by Torres.

The commandant of San Pablo d'Olivenca assured the adventurer that the authorities were not now absent from Manaos, and he even asked Joam Garral to convey to them his compliments. In all probability the raft would arrive before the town in seven weeks, or a little later, say about the 20th or 25th of August.

The guests of the fazender took leave of the Garral family toward the evening, and the following morning, that of the 3d of July, the jangada recommenced its descent of the river.

At noon they passed on the left the mouth of the Yacu-

rupa. This tributary, properly speaking, is a true canal, for it discharges its waters into the Ica, which is itself an affluent of the Amazon. A peculiar phenomenon for the river in places itself to feed its own tributaries!

Toward three o'clock in the afternoon the giant raft passed the mouth of the Jandiatuba, which brings its magnificent black waters from the southwest, and discharges them into the main artery by a mouth of four hundred meters in extent, after having watered the territories of the Culino Indians.

A number of islands were breasted—Pimaicaira, Caturia, Chico, Motachina; some inhabited, others deserted, but all covered with superb vegetation, which forms an unbroken garland of green from one end of the Amazon to the other.

CHAPTER XV

THE CONTINUED DESCENT

On the evening of the 5th of July, the atmosphere had been oppressive since the morning, and threatened approaching storms. Large bats of ruddy color skimmed with their huge wings the current of the Amazon. Among them could be distinguished the *peros-voladors*, somber brown above and light-colored beneath, for which Minha, and particularly the young mulatto, felt an instinctive aversion.

These were in fact, the horrible vampires which suck the blood of the cattle, and even attack man if he is imprudent enough to sleep out in the fields.

"Oh, the dreadful creatures!" cried Lina, hiding her eyes, "they fill me with horror."

"And they are really formidable," added Minha; "are they not, Manoel?"

"To be sure—very formidable," answered he. "These vampires have a particular instinct which leads them to bleed you in the places where the blood most easily comes, and principally behind the ear. During the operation they continue to move their wings, and cause an agreeable freshness which renders the sleep of the sleeper more profound. They tell of people, unconsciously submitted to this hemorrhage for many hours, who have never awoke!"

"Talk no more of things like that, Manoel," said Yaquita,

"or neither Minha nor Lina will dare to sleep to-night."

"Never fear!" replied Manoel; "if necessary, we will watch over them as they sleep.

"Silence!" said Benito.

"What is the matter?" asked Manoel.

"Do you not hear a very curious noise on that side?" continued Benito, pointing to the right bank.

"Certainly," answered Yaquita.

"What causes the noise?" asked Minha. "One would think it was a shingle rolling on the beach of the islands."

"Good! I know what it is," answered Benito. "To-morrow, at daybreak, there will be a rare treat for those who like fresh turtle eggs and little turtles!"

He was not deceived; the noise was produced by innumerable chelonians of all sizes, who were attracted to the islands to lay their eggs.

It is in the sands of the beach that these amphibians choose the most convenient places to deposit their eggs. The operation commences with sunset and finishes with the dawn.

At this moment the chief turtle had left the bed of the river to reconnoiter for a favorable spot; the others, collected in thousands, were soon after occupied in digging with their hind paddles a trench six hundred feet long, a dozen wide, and six deep. After laying their eggs they cover them with a bed of sand, which they beat down with their carapaces as if they were rammers.

This egg-laying operation is a grand affair for the Indians of the Amazon and its tributaries. They watch for the arrival of the chelonians, and proceed to the extraction of the eggs to the sound of the drum; and the harvest is divided into three parts—one to the watchers, another to the Indians, a third to the State, represented by the captains of the shore, who, in their capacity of police, have to superintend the collection of the dues. To certain beaches which the decrease of the waters has left uncovered, and which have the privilege of attracting the greater number of turtles, there has been given the name of "royal beaches." When the harvest is gathered it is a holiday for the Indians, who give themselves up to games, dancing, and drinking; and it is also a holiday for the alligators of the river, who hold high revelry on the remains of the turtles.

On the morrow, at daybreak, Benito, Fragoso, and a few

Indians took a pirogue and landed on the beach of one of the large islands which they had passed during the night. It was not necessary for the jangada to halt. They knew they could catch her up.

On the shore they saw the little hillocks which indicated the places where, that very night, each packet of eggs had been deposited in the trench in groups of from one hundred and sixty to one hundred and ninety. These there was no wish to get out. But an earlier laying had taken place two months before, the eggs had hatched under the action of the heat stored in the sands, and already several thousands of little turtles were running about the beach.

The hunters were therefore in luck. The pirogue was filled with these interesting amphibians, and they arrived just in time for breakfast. The booty was divided between the passengers and crew of the jangada, and if any lasted till the evening it did not last any longer.

In the morning of the 7th of July they were before San Jose de Matura, a town situated near a small river filled up with long grass, on the borders of which a legend says that Indians with tails once existed.

In the morning of the 8th of July they caught sight of the village of San Antonio, two or three little houses lost in the trees at the mouth of the Ica, or Putumayo, which is about nine hundred meters wide.

The Putumayo is one of the most important affluents of the Amazon. Here in the sixteenth century missions were founded by the Spaniards, which were afterward destroyed by the Portuguese, and not a trace of them now remains.

This river comes from the east of the Pasto Mountains to the northeast of Quito, through the finest forests of wild cacao-trees. Navigable for a distance of a hundred and forty leagues for steamers of not greater draught than six feet, it may one day become one of the chief waterways in the west of America.

The bad weather was at last met with. It did not show itself in continual rains, but in frequent storms. These could not hinder the progress of the raft, which offered little resistance to the wind. Its great length rendered it almost insensible to the swell of the Amazon, but during the torrential showers the Garral family had to keep indoors. They had to occupy profitably these hours of leisure. They

chatted together, communicated their observations, and their tongues were seldom idle.

It was under these circumstances that little by little Torres had begun to take a more active part in the conversation. The details of his many voyages throughout the whole north of Brazil afforded him numerous subjects to talk about. The man had certainly seen a great deal, but his observations were those of a sceptic, and he often shocked the straightforward people who were listening to him. It should be said that he showed himself much impressed toward Minha. But these attentions, although they were displeasing to Manoel, were not sufficiently marked for him to interfere. On the other hand, Minha felt for him an instinctive repulsion which she was at no pains to conceal.

On the 9th of July the mouth of the Tunantins appeared on the left bank, forming an estuary of some four hundred feet across, in which it pours its blackish waters, coming from the west-northwest, after having watered the territories of the Cacena Indians. At this spot the Amazon appears under a truly grandiose aspect, but its course is more than ever encumbered with islands and islets. It required all the address of the pilot to steer through the archipelago, going from one bank to another, avoiding the shallows, shirking the eddies, and maintaining the advance.

They might have taken the Ahuaty Parana, a sort of natural canal, which goes off a little below the mouth of the Tunantins, and reenters the principal stream a hundred and twenty miles farther on by the Rio Japura; but if the larger portion of this *furo* measures a hundred and fifty feet across, the narrowest is only sixty feet, and the raft would there have met with difficulty.

At Fonteboa the jangada halted for twelve hours, so as to give a rest to the crew. Fonteboa, like most of the mission villages of the Amazon, has not escaped the capricious fate which, during a lengthened period, moves them about from one place to the other. Probably the hamlet has now finished with its nomadic existence, and has definitely become stationary. So much the better; for it is a charming place, with its thirty houses covered with foliage, and its church dedicated to Notre Dame de Guadaloupe, the Black Virgin of Mexico. Fonteboa has one thousand inhabitants, drawn from the Indians on both banks, who rear

numerous cattle in the fields in the neighborhood. These occupations do not end here, for they are intrepid hunters, or, if they prefer it, intrepid fishers for the manatee.

On the evening of their arrival the young fellows assisted at a very interesting expedition of this nature. Two of these herbivorous cetaceans had just been signalled in the black waters of the Cayaratu, which comes in at Fonteboa. Six brown points were seen moving along the surface, and these were the two pointed snouts and four pinions of the lamantins.

Inexperienced fishermen would at first have taken these moving points for floating wreckage, but the natives of Fonteboa were not to be so deceived. Besides, very soon loud blowings indicated that the spouting animals were vigorously ejecting the air which had become useless for their breathing.

Two ubas, each carrying three fishermen, set off from the bank and approached the manatees, who soon took flight. The black points at first traced a long furrow on the top of the water, and then disappeared for a time.

The fishermen continued their cautious advance. One of them, armed with a primitive harpoon—a long nail at the end of a stick—kept himself in the bow of the boat, while the other two noiselessly paddled on. They waited till the necessary breathing would bring the manatees up again. In ten minutes or thereabouts the animals would certainly appear in a circle more or less confined.

In fact, this time had scarcely elapsed before the black points emerged at a little distance, and two jets of air mingled with vapor were noisily shot forth. The ubas approached, the harpoons were thrown at the same instant; one missed its mark, but the other struck one of the cetaceans near his tail.

It was only necessary to stun the animal, who rarely defends himself when touched by the iron of the harpoon. In a few pulls the cord brought him alongside the uba, and he was towed to the beach at the foot of the village.

It was not a manatee of any size, for it only measured about three feet long. These poor cetaceans have been so hunted that they have become very rare in the Amazon and its affluents, and so little time is left them to grow that the giants of the species do not exceed seven feet. What are

these, after manatees twelve and fifteen feet long, which still abound in the rivers and lakes of Africa?

But it would be difficult to hinder their destruction. The flesh of the manatee is excellent, superior even to that of pork, and the oil furnished by its lard, which is three inches thick, is a product of great value. When the meat is smoke-dried it keeps for a long time, and is capital food. If to this is added that the animal is easily caught, it is not to be wondered at that the species is on its way to complete destruction.

On the 19th of July, at sunrise, the jangada left Fonteboa, and entered between the two completely deserted banks of the river, and breasted some islands shaded with the grand forests of cacao trees. The sky was heavily charged with electric cumuli, warning them of renewed storms.

"It is perhaps in these parts," said Manoel, "that we ought to look for those female warriors who so much astonished Orellana. But we ought to say that, like their predecessors, they do not form separate tribes; they are simply the wives who accompany their husbands to the fight, and who, among the Juruas, have a great reputation for bravery."

The jangada continued to descend; but what a labyrinth the Amazon now appeared! The Rio Japura, whose mouth was forty-eight miles on ahead, and which is one of its largest tributaries, ran parallel with the river. Between them were canals, iguarapes, lagoons, temporary lakes, an inextricable network, which renders the hydrography of this country so difficult.

But if Araujo had no map to guide him, his experience served him more surely, and it was wonderful to see him unraveling the chaos, without ever turning aside from the main river.

In fact, he did so well that on the 25th of July, in the afternoon, after having passed before the village of Parani-Tapera, the raft was anchored at the entrance of the Lake of Ega, or Teffe, which it was useless to enter, for they would not have been able to get out of it again into the Amazon.

But the town of Ega is of some importance; it was worthy of a halt to visit it. It was arranged, therefore, that the jangada should remain on this spot till the 27th of

July, and that on the morrow the large pirogue should take the whole family to Ega. This would give a rest, which was deservedly due to the hard-working crew of the raft.

The night passed at the moorings near a slightly rising shore, and nothing disturbed the quiet. A little sheet-lightning was observable on the horizon, but it came from a distant storm which did not reach the entrance to the lake.

CHAPTER XVI

EGA

At six o'clock in the morning of the 20th of July, Yaquita, Minha, Lina, and the two young men prepared to leave the jangada.

Joam Garral, who had shown no intention of putting his foot on shore, had decided this time, at the request of the ladies of his family, to leave his absorbing daily work and accompany them on their excursion. Torres had evinced no desire to visit Ega, to the satisfaction of Manoel, who had taken a great dislike to the man, and only awaited an opportunity to declare it.

As to Fragoso, he could not have the same reason for going to Ega as had taken him to Tabatinga, which is a place of little importance compared to this.

Ega is a chief town with fifteen hundred inhabitants, and in it reside all those authorities which compose the administration of a considerable city—considerable for the country; that is to say, the military commandant, the chief of the police, the judges, the schoolmaster, and troops under the command of officers of all ranks.

With so many functionaries living in a town, with their wives and children, it was easy to see that hairdressers would be numerous. Such was the case, and Fragoso would not have paid his expenses.

Doubtless, however, the jolly fellow, who could do no business in Ega, had thought to be of the party if Lina went with her mistress, but, just as they were leaving the raft, he resolved to remain, at the request of Lina herself.

"Mr. Fragoso!" she said to him, after taking him aside.

"Miss Lina?" answered Fragoso.

"I do not think that your friend Torres intends to go with us to Ega."

"Certainly not, he is going to stay on board, Miss Lina, but you would oblige me by not calling him my friend!"

"But you undertook to ask a passage for him before he had shown any intention of doing so."

"Yes, and on that occasion, if you would like to know what I think, I made a fool of myself!"

"Quite so! and if you would like to know what I think, I do not like the man at all, Mr. Fragoso."

"Neither do I, Miss Lina, and I have all the time an idea that I have seen him somewhere before. But the remembrance is too vague; the impression, however, is far from being a pleasant one!"

"Where and when could you have met him? Cannot you recall it to mind? It might be useful to know who he is and what he has been."

"No—I try all I can. How long was it ago? In what country? Under what circumstances? And I cannot hit upon it."

"Mr. Fragoso!"

"Miss Lina!"

"Stay on board and keep watch on Torres during our absence!"

"What? Not go with you to Ega, and remain a whole day without seeing you?"

"I ask you to do so!"

"Is it an order?"

"It is an entreaty!"

"I will remain!"

"I thank you!"

"Thank me, then, with a good shake of the hand," replied Fragoso, "that is worth something!"

Lina held out her hand, and Fragoso kept it for a few moments while he looked into her face. And that is the reason why he did not take his place in the pirogue, and became, without appearing to be, the guard upon Torres.

Did the latter notice the feelings of aversion with which he was regarded? Perhaps, but doubtless he had his reasons for taking no account of them.

A distance of four leagues separated the mooring-place from the town of Ega. Eight leagues, there and back, in

a pirogue containing six persons, besides two negroes as rowers, would take some hours, not to mention the fatigue caused by the high temperature, though the sky was veiled with clouds.

Fortunately a lovely breeze blew from the northwest, and if it held would be favorable for crossing Lake Teffe. They could go to Ega and return rapidly without having to tack.

So the lateen sail was hoisted on the mast of the pirogue. Benito took the tiller, and off they went, after a last gesture from Lina to Fragoso to keep his eyes open.

The southern shore of the lake had to be followed to get to Ega. After two hours the pirogue arrived at the port of this ancient mission, founded by the Carmelites, which became a town in 1759, and which General Gama placed forever under Brazilian rule. The passengers landed on a flat beach, on which were to be found not only boats from the interior, but a few of those little schooners which are used in the coasting-trade on the Atlantic seaboard.

When the two girls entered Ega they were at first much astonished. "What a large town!" said Minha.

"What houses! what people!" replied Lina, whose eyes seemed to have expanded so that she might see better.

"Rather!" said Benito, laughingly. "More than fifteen hundred inhabitants! Two hundred houses at the very least! Some of them with a first floor! And two or three streets! Genuine streets!"

"My dear Manoel!" said Minha, "do protect us against my brother! He is making fun of us, and only because he has already been in the finest towns in Amazones and Para!"

"Quite so, and he is also poking fun at his mother," added Yaquita, "for I confess I never saw anything equal to this!"

"Then, mother and sister, you must take great care that you do not fall into a trance when you get to Manaos, and vanish altogether when you reach Belem!"

"Never fear," answered Manoel, "the ladies will have been gently prepared for these grand wonders by visiting the principal cities of the Upper Amazon!"

"Now, Manoel," said Minha, "you are talking just like my brother! Are you making fun of us, too?"

"No, Minha, I assure you."

"Laugh on, gentlemen," said Lina, "and let us look around, my dear mistress, for it is very fine!"

Very fine! A collection of houses, built of mud, white-washed, and principally covered with thatch or palm-leaves; a few built of stone or wood, with verandas, doors, and shutters painted a bright green, standing in the middle of a small orchard of orange-trees in flower. But there were two or three public buildings, a barrack, and a church dedicated to St. Theresa, which was a cathedral by the side of the modest chapel at Iquitos. On looking toward the lake a beautiful panorama unfolded itself, bordered by a frame of cocoa-nut trees and assais, which ended at the edge of the liquid level, and showed beyond the picturesque village of Noqueira, with its few small houses lost in the mass of the old olive-trees on the beach.

But for the two girls there was another cause of wonderment, quite feminine wonderment, too, in the fashions of the fair Egans; not the primitive costume of the natives, converted Omaas or Muras, but the dress of true Brazilian ladies. The wives and daughters of the principal functionaries and merchants of the town pretentiously showed off their Parisian toilets, a little out of date perhaps, for Ega is five hundred leagues away from Para, and this is itself many thousands of miles from Paris.

"Just look at those fine ladies in their fine clothes!"

"Lina will go mad!" exclaimed Benito.

"If those dresses were worn properly," said Minha, "they might not be so ridiculous!"

"My dear Minha," said Manoel, "with your simple gown and straw hat, you are better dressed than any one of these Brazilians, with their headgear and flying petticoats, which are foreign to their country and their race."

"If it pleases you to think so," answered Minha, "I do not envy any of them."

But they had come to see. They walked through the streets, which contained more stalls than shops; they strolled about the market-place, the rendezvous of the fashionables, who were nearly stifled in their European clothes; they even breakfasted at an hotel—it was scarcely an inn—whose cookery caused them to regret the excellent service on the raft.

After dinner, at which only turtle flesh, served up in

different forms, appeared, the Garral family went for the last time to admire the borders of the lake as the setting sun gilded it with its rays; then they rejoined their pirogue, somewhat disillusionized perhaps as to the magnificence of a town which one hour would give time enough to visit, and a little tired with walking about its stifling streets which were not nearly so pleasant as the shady pathways of Iquitos. The inquisitive Lina's enthusiasm alone had not been damped.

They all took their places in the pirogue. The wind remained in the northwest, and had freshened with the evening. The sail was hoisted. They took the same course as in the morning, across the lake fed by the black waters of the Rio Teffe, which, according to the Indians, is navigable toward the southwest for forty days' journey. At eight o'clock the pirogue regained the mooring-place and hailed the jangada.

As soon as Lina could get Fragoso aside, "Have you seen anything suspicious?" she inquired.

"Nothing, Miss Lina," he replied; "Torres has scarcely left his cabin, where he has been reading and writing."

"He did not get into the house or the dining-room, as I feared?"

"No; all the time he was not in his cabin he was in the bow of the raft."

"And what was he doing?"

"Holding an old piece of paper in his hand consulting it with great attention, and muttering a lot of incomprehensible words."

"All that is not so unimportant as you think, Mr. Fragoso! These readings and writings and old papers have their interest! He is neither a professor nor a lawyer, this reader and writer!"

"You are right!"

"Still watch him, Mr. Fragoso!"

"I will watch him always, Miss Lina," replied Fragoso.

On the morrow, the 27th of July, at daybreak, Benito gave the pilot the signal to start.

Away between the islands, in the Bay of Arenapo, the mouth of the Japura, six thousand six hundred feet wide, was seen for an instant. This large tributary comes into the Amazon through eight mouths, as if it were pouring

into some gulf or ocean. But its waters come from afar, and it is the mountains of the Republic of Ecuador which start them on a course that there are no falls to break until two hundred and ten leagues from its junction with the main stream.

All this day was spent in descending to the island of Yapura, after which the river, less interfered with, makes navigation much easier. The current is not so rapid and the islets are easily avoided, so that there were no touchings or groundings.

The next day the jangada coasted along by vast beaches formed by undulating high domes, which served as the barriers of immense pasture-grounds, in which the whole of the cattle in Europe could be raised and fed. These sandbanks are considered to be the richest turtle grounds in the basin of the Upper Amazon.

On the evening of the 29th of July they were securely moored off the island of Catua, so as to pass the night, which promised to be dark. On this island, as soon as the sun rose above the horizon, there appeared a party of Muras Indians, the remains of that ancient and powerful tribe, which formerly occupied more than a hundred leagues of the river bank between the Teffe and the Madeira.

These Indians went and came, watching the raft, which remained stationary. There were about a hundred of them armed with blow-tubes formed of a reed peculiar to these parts, and strengthened outside by the stem of a dwarf palm from which the pith has been extracted.

Joam Garral quitted for an instant the work which took up all his time, to warn his people to keep a good guard and not to provoke these Indians.

In truth, the sides were not well matched. The Muras are remarkably clever at sending through their blow-tubes arrows which cause incurable wounds, even at a range of three hundred paces. These arrows, made of the leaf of the *coucourite* palm, are nine or ten inches long, with a point like a needle, and poisoned with *curare*.

Curare, or *wourah,* the liquor " which kills in a whisper," as the Indians say, is prepared from the sap of one of the euphorbiaceæ and the juice of a bulbous strychnos, not to mention the paste of venomous ants and poisonous serpent fangs, which they mix with it.

"It is indeed a terrible poison," said Manoel. "It attacks at once those nerves by which the movements are subordinated to the will. But the heart is not touched, and it does not cease to beat until the extinction of the vital functions, and besides, no antidote is known to the poison, which commences by numbness of the limbs."

Very fortunately, these Muras made no hostile demonstrations, although they entertain a profound hatred toward the whites. They have, in truth, no longer the courage of their ancestors.

At nightfall a five-holed flute was heard behind the trees in the island, playing several airs in a minor key. Another flute answered. This interchange of musical phrases lasted for two or three minutes, and the Muras disappeared.

Fragoso, in an exuberant moment, had tried to reply by a song, in his own fashion, but Lina had clapped her hand on his mouth, and prevented his showing off his insignificant singing talents, which he was so willingly lavish of.

No fresh incident occurred in the life on board, which proceeded with almost methodical regularity.

Fragoso, urged on by Lina, did not cease to watch Torres. Many times he tried to get him to talk about his past life, but the adventurer eluded all conversation on the subject, and ended by maintaining a strict reserve toward the barber.

His intercourse with the Garral family remained the same. If he spoke little to Joam, he addressed himself more willingly to Yaquita and her daughter, and appeared not to notice the evident coolness with which he was received. They all agreed that when the raft arrived at Manaos, Torres should leave it, and that they would never speak of him again. Yaquita followed the advice of Padre Passanha, who counseled patience, but the good priest had not such an easy task in Manoel, who was quite disposed to put on shore the intruder who had been so unfortunately taken on the raft.

The only thing that happened on this evening was the following: A pirogue, going down the river, came alongside the jangada, after being hailed by Joam Garral. "Are you going to Manaos?" asked he of the Indian who commanded and was steering her.

"Yes," replied he.

"When will you get there?"

"In eight days."

"Then you will arrive before we shall. Will you deliver a letter for me?"

"With pleasure."

"Take this letter, then, my friend, and deliver it at Manaos."

The Indian took the letter which Joam gave him, and a handful of reis was the price of the commission he had undertaken.

No members of the family, then gone into the house, knew anything of this. Torres was the only witness. He heard a few words exchanged between Joam and the Indian, and from the cloud which passed over his face it was easy to see that the sending of this letter considerably surprised him.

CHAPTER XVII

AN ATTACK

However, if Manoel, to avoid giving rise to a violent scene on board, said nothing on the subject of Torres, he resolved to have an explanation with Benito.

"Benito," he began, after taking him to the bow of the jangada, "I have something to say to you."

Benito, generally so good-humored, stopped as he looked at Manoel, and a cloud came over his countenance. "I know," he said, "it is about Torres."

"Yes, Benito."

"And I also wish to speak to you."

"You have then noticed his attention to Minha?" said Manoel, turning pale.

"Ah! It is not a feeling of jealousy, though, that exasperates you against such a man?" said Benito quickly.

"No!" replied Manoel. "Decidedly not! Heaven forbid I should do such an injury to the girl who is to become my wife. No, Benito! She holds the adventurer in horror! I am not thinking anything of that sort; but it distresses me to see this adventurer constantly obtruding himself by his presence and conversation on your mother and sister, and seeking to introduce himself into that intimacy with your family which is already mine."

"Manoel," gravely answered Benito, "I share your aversion for this dubious individual, and had I consulted my feelings, I would already have driven Torres off the raft! But I dare not!"

"You dare not?" said Manoel, seizing the hand of his friend. "You dare not?"

"Listen to me, Manoel," continued Benito. "You have observed Torres well, have you not? You have remarked his attentions to my sister! Nothing can be truer! But while you have been noticing that, have you not seen that this annoying man never keeps his eyes off my father, no matter if he is near to him or far from him, and that he seems to have some spiteful secret intention in watching him with such unaccountable persistency?"

"What are you talking about, Benito? Have you any reason to think that Torres bears some grudge against Joam Garral?"

"No! I think nothing!" replied Benito, "it is only a presentiment! But look well at Torres, study his face with care, and you will see what an evil grin he has whenever my father comes into his sight."

"Well, then," exclaimed Manoel, "if it is so, Benito, the more reason for clearing him out!"

"More reason—or less reason," replied Benito. "Manoel, I fear—what? I know not—but to force my father to get rid of Torres would perhaps be imprudent! I repeat it, I am afraid, though no positive fact enables me to explain my fear to myself!" And Benito seemed to shudder with anger as he said these words.

"Then," said Manoel, "you think we had better wait?"

"Yes; wait, before doing anything, but above all things let us be on our guard!"

"After all," answered Manoel, "in twenty days we shall be at Manaos. There Torres must stop. There he will leave us, and we shall be relieved of his presence for good! Till then we must keep our eyes on him!"

"You understand me, Manoel?" asked Benito.

"I understand you, my friend, my brother!" replied Manoel, "although I do not share, and cannot share, your fears! What connection can possibly exist between your father and this adventurer? Evidently your father has never seen him!"

"I do not say that my father knows Torres," said Benito, "but assuredly it seems to me that Torres knows my father. What was the fellow doing in the neighborhood of the fazenda when we met him in the forest of Iquitos? Why did he then refuse the hospitality which we offered, so as to afterward manage to force himself on us as our traveling companion? We arrive at Tabatinga, and there he is as if he was waiting for us! The probability is that these meetings were in pursuance of a preconceived plan. When I see the shifty, dogged look of Torres, all this crowds on my mind. I do not know! I am losing myself in things that defy explanation! Oh! why did I ever think of offering to take him on board this raft?"

"Be calm, Benito, I pray you!"

"Manoel!" continued Benito, who seemed to be powerless to contain himself, "think you that if it only concerned me—this man who inspires us all with such aversion and disgust—I should hesitate to throw him overboard? But when it concerns my father, I fear lest in giving way to my impressions I may be injuring my object? Something tells me that with this scheming fellow there may be danger in doing anything until he has given us the right—the right and the duty—to do it. In short, on the jangada, he is in our power, and if we both keep good watch over my father, we can spoil his game, no matter how sure it may be, and force him to unmask and betray himself! Then wait a little longer!"

The arrival of Torres in the bow of the raft broke off the conversation. Torres looked slyly at the two young men, but said not a word.

Benito was not deceived when he said that the adventurer's eyes were never off Joam Garral as long as he fancied he was unobserved. No! he was not deceived when he said that Torres' face grew evil when he looked at his father!

By what mysterious bond could these two men—one nobleness itself, that was self-evident—be connected with each other?

Such being the state of affairs it was certainly difficult for Torres, constantly watched as he was by the two young men, by Fragoso and Lina, to make a single movement without having instantly to repress it. Perhaps he understood the position. If he did, he

did not show it, for his manner changed not in the least.

Satisfied with their mutual explanation, Manoel and Benito promised to keep him in sight without doing anything to awaken his suspicions.

During the following days the jangada passed on the right the mouths of the rivers Camara, Aru, and Yuripari, whose waters instead of flowing into the Amazon run off to the south to feed the Rio des Purus, and return by it into the main river. At five o'clock on the evening of the 10th of August, they put into the island of Cocos.

They there passed a *seringal.* This name is applied to a caoutchouc or rubber plantation, the caoutchouc being extracted from the *seringueira* tree.

It is said that by negligence or bad management, the number of these trees is decreasing in the basin of the Amazon, but the forests of seringueira trees are still very considerable on the banks of the Madeira, Purus, and other tributaries.

There were here some twenty Indians collecting and working the caoutchouc, an operation which principally takes place during the months of May, June, and July. After having ascertained that the trees, well prepared by the river floods which have bathed their stems to a height of about four feet, are in good condition for the harvest, the Indians set to work. Incisions are made into the seringueiras; below the wound small pots are attached, which twenty-four hours suffice to fill with a milky sap. It can also be collected by means of a hollow bamboo, and a receptacle placed on the ground at the foot of the tree.

The sap being obtained, the Indians, to prevent the separation of its peculiar resins, fumigate it over a fire of the nuts of the assai palm. By spreading out the sap on a wooden scoop, and shaking it in the smoke, its coagulation is almost immediately obtained; it assumes a grayish yellow tinge and solidifies. The layers formed in succession are detached from the scoop, exposed to the sun, hardened, and assume the brownish color with which we are familiar. The manufacture is then complete.

Benito, finding a capital opportunity, bought from the Indians all the caoutchouc stored in their cabins, which, by the way, are mostly built on piles. The price he gave them was sufficiently remunerative, and they were highly satisfied.

The current took along the jangada more steadily, and on the 18th of August it stopped at the village of Pasquero to pass the night. The sun was already low on the horizon, and with the rapidity of these latitudes, was about to set like an enormous meteor.

Joam Garral and his wife, Lina, and old Cybele, were in front of the house. Torres, after having for an instant turned toward Joam, as if he would speak to him, and prevented perhaps by the arrival of Padre Passanha, who had come to bid the family good-night, had gone back to his cabin.

The Indians and the negroes were at their quarters along the sides. Araujo, seated at the bow, was watching the current which extended straight away in front of him. Manoel and Benito, with their eyes open, but chatting and smoking with apparent indifference, walked about the central part of the raft awaiting the hour of repose.

All at once Manoel stopped Benito with his hand and said, "What a queer smell! Am I wrong? Do vou not notice it?"

"One would say that it was the odor of burning musk!" replied Benito. "There ought to be some alligators asleep on the neighboring beach!"

"Well, Nature has done wisely in allowing them so to betray themselves."

"Yes," said Benito, "it is fortunate, for they are sufficiently formidable creatures!"

Often at the close of the day these saurians love to stretch themselves on the shore, and install themselves comfortably there to pass the night. Crouched at the opening of a hole, into which they have crept back, they sleep with the mouth open, the upper jaw perpendicularly erect, so as to lie in wait for their prey. To these amphibians it is but sport to launch themselves in its pursuit, either by swimming through the waters propelled by their tails, or running along the bank with a speed that no man can equal.

It is on these huge beaches that the caymans are born, live, and die, not without affording extraordinary examples of longevity. Not only can the old ones, the centenarians, be recognized by the greenish moss which carpets their carcass and is scattered over its protuberances, but by their natural ferocity, which increases with age. As Benito said,

they are formidable creatures, and it is fortunate that their attacks can be guarded against.

Suddenly cries were heard in the bow. "Caymans! caymans!"

Manoel and Benito came forward. Three large saurians, from fifteen to twenty feet long, had managed to clamber on to the platform of the raft.

"Bring the guns! Bring the guns!" shouted Benito, making signs to the Indians and the blacks to get behind.

"Into the house!" said Manoel, "make haste!"

And in truth, as they could not attack them at once, the best thing they could do was to get into shelter without delay.

It was done in an instant. The Garral family took refuge in the house, where the two young men joined them. The Indians and the negroes ran into their huts and cabins. As they were shutting the door——

"And Minha!" said Manoel.

"She is not there!" replied Lina, who had just run to her mistress's room.

"Good heavens! where is she?" exclaimed her mother, and they all shouted at once, "Minha! Minha!"

No reply.

"There she is on the bow of the jangada!" said Benito.

"Minha!" shouted Manoel.

The two young men, and Fragoso and Joam Garral, thinking no more of danger, rushed out of the house, guns in hand. Scarcely were they outside when two of the alligators made a half-turn and ran toward them.

A dose of buckshot in the head, close to the eye, from Benito, stopped one of the monsters, who, mortally wounded, writhed in frightful convulsions and fell on his side. But the second still lived, and came on, and there was no way of avoiding him.

The huge alligator tore up to Joam Garral, and after knocking him over with a sweep of his tail, ran at him with open jaws.

At this moment Torres rushed from the cabin, hatchet in hand, and struck such a terrific blow that its edge sunk into the jaw of the cayman and left him defenseless.

Blinded by the blood, the animal flew to the side, and, designedly or not, fell over and was lost in the stream.

"Minha! Minha!" shouted Manoel in distraction, when he got to the bow of the jangada.

Suddenly she came in view. She had taken refuge in the cabin of Araujo, and the cabin had just been upset by a powerful blow from a third alligator. Minha was flying aft, pursued by the monster, who was not six feet away from her.

Minha fell. A second shot from Benito failed to stop the cayman. He only struck the animal's carapace, and the scales flew in splinters, but the ball did not penetrate.

Manoel threw himself at the girl to raise her, or to snatch her from death! A side-blow from the animal's tail knocked him down, too.

Minha fainted, and the mouth of the alligator opened to crush her!

And then Fragoso jumped on to the animal, and thrust in a knife to the very bottom of his throat, at the risk of having his arm snapped off by the two jaws, had they quickly closed.

Fragoso pulled out his arm in time, but he could not avoid the shock of the cayman, and was hurled back into the river, whose waters reddened all around.

"Fragoso! Fragoso!" shrieked Lina, kneeling on the edge of the raft.

A second afterward Fragoso reappeared on the surface of the Amazon—safe and sound.

But, at the peril of his life he had saved the young girl, who soon came to. And as all hands were held out to him, Manoel's, Yaquita's, Minha's, and Lina's, and he did not know what to say, he ended by squeezing the hands of the young mulatto.

However, though Fragoso had saved Minha, it was assuredly to the intervention of Torres that Joam Garral owed his safety.

It was not, therefore, the fazender's life that the adventurer wanted. In the face of this fact, so much had to be admitted. Manoel said this to Benito in an undertone.

"That is true!" replied Benito, embarrassed. "You are right, and in a sense it is one cruel care the less! Nevertheless, Manoel, my suspicions still exist! It is not always a man's worst enemy who wishes him dead!"

Joam Garral walked up to Torres. "Thank you, Tor-

res!" he said, holding out his hand. The adventurer took a step or two backward without replying.

"Torres," continued Joam, "I am sorry that we are arriving at the end of our voyage, and that in a few days we must part! I owe you——"

"Joam Garral," answered Torres, "you owe me nothing! Your life is precious to me above all things! But if you will allow me—I have been thinking—in place of stopping at Manaos, I will go to Belem. Will you take me there?"

Joam Garral replied by an affirmative nod.

In hearing this demand, Benito in an unguarded moment was about to intervene, but Manoel stopped him, and the young man checked himself, though not without a violent effort.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE ARRIVAL DINNER

In the morning, after a night which was scarcely sufficient to calm so much excitement, they unmoored from the cayman beach and departed. Before five days, if nothing interfered with their voyage, the raft would reach the port of Manaos.

Minha had quite recovered from her fright, and her eyes and smiles thanked all those who had risked their lives for her.

As for Lina, it seemed as though she was more grateful to the brave Fragoso than if it was herself he had saved.

"I will pay you back, sooner or later, Mr. Fragoso!" said she, smiling.

"And how, Miss Lina?"

"Oh! You know very well!"

"Then if I know it, let it be soon and not late!" replied the good-natured fellow.

And from this day it began to be whispered about that the charming Lina was engaged to Fragoso, that their marriage would take place at the same time as that of Minha and Manoel, and that the young couple would remain at Belem with the others.

"Capital! capital!" repeated Fragoso, unceasingly; "but I never thought Para was such a long ways off!"

As for Manoel and Benito, they had had a long conversation about what had passed. There could be no question about obtaining from Joam Garral the dismissal of his rescuer.

"Your life is precious to me above all things!" Torres had said.

This reply, hyperbolical and enigmatical at the time, Benito had heard and remembered.

In the meantime the young men could do nothing. More than ever they were reduced to waiting—to waiting not for four or five days, but for seven or eight weeks—that is to say, for whatever time it would take the raft to get to Belem.

"There is in all this some mystery that I cannot understand," said Benito.

"Yes, but we are assured on one point," answered Manoel. "It is certain that Torres does not want your father's life. For the rest, we must still watch!"

It seemed that from this day Torres desired to keep himself more reserved. He did not seek to intrude on the family, and was even less assiduous toward Minha. There seemed a relief in the situation of which all, save perhaps Joam Garral, felt the gravity.

On the morrow, the 20th of August, the pilot, who kept near the right bank on account of the uncertain eddies on the left, entered between the bank and the islands. Beyond this bank the country was dotted with large and small lakes, much as those of Calderon, Huarandeina, and other black-watered lagoons. This water-system marks the approach of the Rio Negro, the most remarkable of all the tributaries of the Amazon. In reality the main river still bore the name of the Solimoens, and it is only after the junction of the Rio Negro that it takes the name which has made it celebrated among the rivers of the globe.

During this day the raft had to be worked under curious conditions. The arm followed by the pilot, between Calderon Island and the shore, was very narrow, although it appeared sufficiently large. This was owing to a great portion of the island being slightly below the mean level, but still covered by the high flood waters. On each side were

massed forests of giant trees, whose summits towered some fifty feet above the ground, and joining one bank to the other, formed an immense cradle.

On the left nothing could be more picturesque than this flooded forest, which seemed to have been planted in the middle of a lake. The stems of the trees arose from the clear, still water, in which every interlacement of their boughs were reflected with unequaled purity. They were arranged on an immense sheet of glass, like the trees in miniature on some table epergne, and their reflection could not be more perfect. The difference between the image and the reality could scarcely be described. Duplicates of grandeur, terminated above and below by a vast parasol of green, they seemed to form two hemispheres, inside which the jangada appeared to follow one of the great circles.

It had been necessary to bring the raft under these boughs, against which flowed the gentle current of the stream. It was impossible to go back. Hence the task of navigating with extreme care, so as to avoid the collisions on either side.

In this all Araujo's ability was shown, and he was admirably seconded by his crew. The trees of the forest furnished the resting-places for the long poles which kept the jangada in its course. The least blow to the jangada would have endangered the complete demolition of the woodwork, and caused the loss, if not of the crew, of the greater part of the cargo.

"It is truly very beautiful," said Minha, "and it would be very pleasant for us always to travel in this way, on this quiet water, shaded from the rays of the sun."

"At the same time pleasant and dangerous, dear Minha," said Manoel. "In a pirogue there is doubtless nothing to fear in sailing here, but on a huge raft of wood better have a free course and a clear stream."

"We shall be quite through the forest in a couple of hours," said the pilot.

"Look well at it, then!" said Lina. "All these beautiful things pass so quickly! Ah! dear mistress! do you see the troops of monkeys disporting in the higher branches, and the birds admiring themselves in the clear water?"

"And the flowers half-opened on the surface," replied Minha, "and which the current dandles like the breeze!"

"And the long lianas, which so oddly stretch from one tree to another!" added the young mulatto.

"And no Fragoso at the end of them!" said Lina's betrothed. "That was rather a nice flower you gathered in the forest of Iquitos!"

"Just behold the flower—the only one in the world," said Lina, quizzingly; "and, mistress! just look at the splendid plants!"

And Lina pointed to the nymphæas with their colossal leaves, whose flowers bear buds as large as cocoa-nuts. Then, just where the banks plunged beneath the waters, there were clumps of *mucumus,* reeds with large leaves, whose elastic stems bend to give passage to the pirogues and close again behind them. There was here what would tempt any sportsman, for a whole world of aquatic birds fluttered between the higher clusters, which shook with the stream.

And along the top of the water glided long and swiftly swimming snakes, among them the formidable gymnotus, whose electric discharges successfully repeated paralyze the most robust of men or animals, and end by dealing death. Precautions had to be taken against the *sucurijus* serpents, which, coiled around the trunk of some tree, unroll themselves, hang down, seize their prey, and draw it into their rings, which are powerful enough to crush a bullock. Have there not been met with in these Amazonian forests reptiles from thirty to thirty-five feet long? and even, according to M. Carrey, do not some exist whose length reaches forty-seven feet, and whose girth is that of a hogshead? Had one of these sucurijus, indeed, got on to the raft, he would have proved as formidable as an alligator.

Very fortunately, the travelers had to contend with neither gymnotus, nor sucuriju, and the passages across the submerged forest, which lasted about two hours, was effected without accident.

Three days passed. They neared Manaos. Twenty-four hours more, and the raft would be off the mouth of the Rio Negro, before the capital of the province of Amazones.

In fact, on the 23d of August, at five o'clock in the evening, they stopped at the southern point of Muras Island, on the right bank of the stream. They only had to cross obliquely for a few miles to arrive at the port, but the pilot

Araujo very properly would not risk it on that day, as night was coming on. The three miles which remained would take three hours to travel and to keep to the course of the river it was necessary, above all things, to have a clear outlook.

This evening the dinner, which promised to be the last of this first part of the voyage, was not served without a certain amount of ceremony. Half the journey on the Amazon had been accomplished, and the task was worthy of a jovial repast. It was fitting to drink to the health of Amazones a few glasses of that generous liquor which comes from the coasts of Oporto and Setubal. Besides, this was, in a way, the betrothal dinner of Fragoso and the charming Lina—that of Manoel and Minha had taken place at the fazenda of Iquitos several weeks before. After the young master and mistress, it was the turn of the faithful couple who were attached to them by so many bonds of gratitude.

So Lina, who was to remain in the service of Minha, and Fragoso, who was about to enter into that of Manoel Valdez, sat at the common table, and even had the places of honor reserved for them.

Torres naturally was present at the dinner, which was worthy of the larder and kitchen of the jangada.

The adventurer seated opposite to Joam Garral, who was always taciturn, listened to all that was said, but took no part in the conversation. Benito quietly and attentively watched him. The eyes of Torres, with a peculiar expression, constantly sought his father. One would have called them the eyes of some wild beast trying to fascinate his prey before he sprang on it.

Manoel talked mostly with Minha. Between whiles his eyes wandered to Torres, but he acted his part more successfully than Benito in a situation which, if it did not finish at Manaos, would certainly end at Belem.

The dinner was jolly enough; Lina kept it going with her good-humor, Fragoso with his witty repartees. The Padre Passanha looked gayly around on the little world he cherished, and on the two young couples which his hands would shortly bless in the waters of Para.

"Eat, padre," said Benito, who joined in the general conversation; "do honor to this betrothal dinner. You

will want some strength to celebrate both marriages at once!"

"Well, my dear boy," replied Passanha, "seek out some lovely and gentle girl who wishes you well, and you will see that I can marry you at the same time!"

"Well answered, padre!" exclaimed Manoel. "Let us drink to the coming marriage of Benito."

"We must look out for some nice young lady at Belem," said Minha. "He should do what everybody else does."

"To the wedding of Mr. Benito!" said Fragoso, "who ought to wish all the world to marry him!"

"They are right, sir," said Yaquita. "I also drink to your marriage, and may you be as happy as Minha and Manoel, and as I and your father have been!"

"As you always will be, it is to be hoped," said Torres, drinking a glass of port without having pledged anybody. "All here have their happiness in their own hands."

It was difficult to say, but this wish, coming from the adventurer, left an unpleasant impression.

Manoel felt this, and wishing to destroy its effect, "Look here, padre," said he, "while we are on this subject, are there not any more couples to betroth on the raft?"

"I do not know," answered Padre Passanha, "unless Torres—you are not married, I believe?"

"No; I am, and always shall be, a bachelor." Benito and Manoel thought that while thus speaking Torres looked toward Minha.

"And what should prevent you marrying?" replied Padre Passanha; "at Belem you could find a wife whose age would suit yours, and it would be possible perhaps for you to settle in that town. That would be better than this wandering life, of which, up to the present, you have not made so very much."

"You are right, padre," answered Torres; "I do not say no. Besides, the example is contagious. Seeing all these young couples gives me rather a longing for marriage. But I am quite a stranger in Belem, and, for certain reasons, that would make my settlement more difficult."

"Where do you come from, then?" asked Fragoso, who always had the idea that he had already met Torres somewhere.

"From the province of Minas Geraes."

"And you were born——"

"In the capital of the diamond district, Tijuco."

Those who had seen Joam Garral at this moment would have been surprised at the fixity of his look which met that of Torres.

CHAPTER XIX

ANCIENT HISTORY

THE conversation was continued by Fragoso, who immediately rejoined, "What! you come from Tijuco, from the very capital of the diamond district?"

"Yes," said Torres. "Do you hail from there?"

"No! I come from the Atlantic seaboard in the north of Brazil," replied Fragoso.

"You do not know this diamond country, Mr. Manoel?" asked Torres.

A negative shake of the head from the young man was the only reply.

"And you, Mr. Benito," continued Torres, addressing the younger Garral, whom he evidently wished to join in the conversation; "you have never had curiosity enough to visit the diamond arraval?"

"Never," dryly replied Benito.

"Ah! I should like to see that country," said Fragoso, who unconsciously played Torres' game. "It seems to me I should finish by picking up a diamond worth something considerable."

"And what would you do with this diamond worth something considerable, Fragoso?" asked Lina.

"Sell it!"

"Then you would get rich all of a sudden!"

"Very rich!"

"Well, if you had been rich three months ago you would never have had the idea of—that liana?"

"And if I had not had that," exclaimed Fragoso, "I should not have found a charming little wife who—well, assuredly, all is for the best!"

"You see, Fragoso," said Minha, "when you marry Lina, diamond takes the place of diamond, and you do not lose by the change!"

"To be sure, Miss Minha," gallantly replied Fragoso; "rather I gain!"

There could be no doubt that Torres did not want the subject to drop, for he went on with, "It is a fact that at Tijuco sudden fortunes are realized enough to turn any man's head! Have you heard tell of the famous diamond of Abaete, which was valued at more than two million contos of reis? Well, this stone, which weighed an ounce, came from the Brazilian mines! And they were three convicts—yes! three men sentenced to transportation for life—who found it by chance in the River Abaete, at ninety leagues from Terro de Frio."

"At a stroke their fortune was made?" asked Fragoso.

"No," replied Torres; "the diamond was handed over to the governor-general of the mines. The value of the stone was recognized, and King John VI., of Portugal, had it cut, and wore it on his neck on great occasions. As for the convicts, they got their pardon, but that was all, and the cleverest could not get much of an income out of that!"

"You, doubtless?" said Benito, very dryly.

"Yes—I? Why not?" answered Torres. "Have you ever been to the diamond district?" added he, this time addressing Joam Garral.

"Never!" said Joam, looking straight at him.

"That is a pity!" replied he. "You should go there one day. It is a very curious place, I assure you. The diamond valley is an isolated spot in the vast empire of Brazil, something like a park of a dozen leagues in circumference, which, in the nature of its soil, its vegetation, and its sandy rocks surrounded by a circle of high mountains, differs considerably from the neighboring provinces. But as I have told you, it is one of the richest places in the world, for from 1807 to 1817 the annual return was about eighteen thousand carats. Ah! there have been some rare finds there, not only for the climbers who seek the precious stone up to the very tops of the mountains, but also for the smugglers who fraudulently export it. But the work in the mines is not so pleasant, and the two thousand negroes employed in that work by the government are obliged even to divert the water-courses to get at the diamantiferous sand. Formerly it was easier work."

" In short," said Fragoso, " the good time has gone! "

" But what is still easy is to get the diamonds in scoundrel fashion—that is, by theft; and—stop! in 1826, when I was about eight years old, a terrible drama occurred at Tijuco, which showed that criminals would recoil at nothing if they could gain a fortune by one bold stroke. But perhaps you are not interested? "

" On the contrary, Torres; go on," replied Joam Garral, in a singularly calm voice.

" So be it," answered Torres. " Well, the story is about stealing diamonds, and a handful of those pretty stones is worth a million, sometimes two! " And Torres, whose face expressed the vilest sentiments of cupidity, almost unconsciously made a gesture of opening and shutting his hand.

" This is what happened," he continued. " At Tijuco it is customary to send off in one delivery the diamonds collected during the year. They are divided into two lots, according to their size, after being assorted in a dozen sieves with holes of different dimensions. These lots are put into sacks and forwarded to Rio de Janeiro; but as they are worth many millions you may imagine they are heavily escorted. A workman, chosen by the superintendent, four cavalrymen from the district regiment, and ten men on foot, complete the convoy. They first make for Villa Rica, where the commandant puts his seal on the sacks, and then the convoy continues its journey to Rio de Janeiro. I should add that, for the sake of precaution, the start is always kept secret. Well, in 1826, a young fellow named Dacosta, who was about twenty-two or twenty-three years of age, and who for some years had been employed at Tijuco in the offices of the governor-general, devised the following scheme. He leagued himself with a band of smugglers, and informed them of the date of the departure of the convoy. The scoundrels took their measures accordingly. They were numerous and well armed. Close to Villa Rica, during the night of the 22d of January, the gang suddenly attacked the diamond escort, who defended themselves bravely, but were all massacred, with the exception of one man, who, seriously wounded, managed to escape and bring the news of the horrible deed. The workman was not spared any more than the soldiers. He fell beneath

the blows of the thieves, and was doubtless dragged away and thrown over some precipice, for his body was never found."

"And this Dacosta?" asked Joam Garral.

"Well, his crime did not do him much good, for suspicion soon pointed toward him. He was accused of having got up the affair. In vain he protested he was innocent. Thanks to the situation he held, he was in a position to know the date on which the convoy's departure was to take place. He alone could inform the smugglers. He was charged, arrested, tried, and sentenced to death. Such a sentence required his execution in twenty-four hours."

"Was the fellow executed?" asked Fragoso.

"No," replied Torres, "they shut him up in the prison at Ti la Rica, and during the night, a few hours only before the execution, whether alone or helped by others, he managed to escape."

"Has this young man been heard of since?" asked Joam Garral.

"Never," replied Torres. "He probably left Brazil, and now, in some distant land, lives a cheerful life with the proceeds of the robbery which he is sure to have realized."

"Perhaps, on the other hand, he died miserably!" answered Joam Garral.

"And, perhaps," added Padre Passanha, "Heaven caused him to feel remorse for his crime."

Here they all arose from the table, and having finished their dinner, went out to breathe the evening air. The sun was low on the horizon, but an hour had still to elapse before nightfall.

"These stories are not very lively," said Fragoso; "and our betrothal dinner was best at the beginning!"

"But it was your fault, Fragoso," answered Lina.

"How my fault?"

"It was you who went on talking about the district and the diamonds, when you should not have done so."

"Well, that's true," replied Fragoso; "but I had no idea we were going to wind up in that fashion."

"You were the first to blame!"

"And the first to be punished, Miss Lina; for I did not hear you laugh all through the dessert."

The whole family strolled toward the bow of the jangada. Manoel and Benito walked one behind the other without speaking. Yaquita and her daughter silently followed, and all felt an unaccountable impression of sadness, as if they had a presentiment of some coming calamity.

Torres stepped up to Joam Garral, who, with bowed head, seemed to be lost in thought, and putting his hand on his shoulder, said: "Joam Garral, may I have a few minutes' conversation with you?"

Joam looked at Torres.

"Here?" he asked.

"No; in private."

"Come, then."

They went toward the house, entered it, and the door was shut on them.

It would be difficult to depict what every one felt when Joam Garral and Torres disappeared. What could there be in common between the adventurer and the honest fazender of Iquitos? The menace of some frightful misfortune seemed to hang over the whole family, and they scarcely dared speak to each other.

"Manoel!" said Benito, seizing his friend's arm, "whatever happens, this man must leave us to-morrow at Manaos."

"Yes! it is imperative!" answered Manoel.

"And if through him some misfortune happens to my father—I shall kill him!"

CHAPTER XX

BETWEEN THE TWO MEN

For a moment, alone in the room, where none could see or hear them, Joam Garral and Torres looked at each other without uttering a word. Did the adventurer hesitate to speak? Did he suspect that Joam Garral would only reply to his demands by a scornful silence?

Yes! Probably so. So Torres did not question him. At the outset of the conversation he took the affirmative, and assumed the part of an accuser.

"Joam," he said, "your name is not Garral. Your name is Dacosta."

At the guilty name which Torres thus gave him, Joam Garral could not repress a slight shudder.

"You are Joam Dacosta," continued Torres, "who, five-and-twenty years ago, were a clerk in the governor-general's office at Tijuco, and you are the man who was sentenced to death in this affair of the robbery and murder!"

No response from Joam Garral, whose strange tranquillity surprised the adventurer. Had he made a mistake in accusing his host? No! For Joam Garral made no start at the terrible accusations. Doubtless he wanted to know to what Torres was coming.

"Joam Dacosta, I repeat! It was you whom they sought for in this diamond affair, whom they convicted of crime and condemned to death, and it was you who escaped from the prison at Villa Rica a few hours before you should have been executed! Do you not answer?"

Rather a long silence followed this direct question which Torres asked. Joam Garral, still calm, took a seat. His elbow rested on a small table, and he looked fixedly at his accuser without bending his head.

"Will you reply?" repeated Torres.

"What reply do you want from me?" said Joam, quietly.

"A reply," slowly answered Torres, "that will keep me from finding out the chief of the police at Manaos, and saying to him: 'A man is there whose identity can be easily established, who can be recognized even after twenty years' absence, and this man was the instigator of the diamond robbery at Tijuco. He was the accomplice of the murderers of the soldiers of the escort; he is the man who escaped from execution; he is Joam Garral, whose true name is Joam Dacosta.'"

"And so, Torres," said Joam Garral, "I shall have nothing to fear from you if I give the answer you require?"

"Nothing, for then neither you nor I will have any interest in talking about the matter."

"Neither you nor I?" asked Joam Garral. "It is not with money, then, that your silence is to be bought."

"No! No matter how much you offered me!"

"What do you want, then?"

"Joam Garral," replied Torres, "here is my proposal.

Do not be in a hurry to reply by a formal refusal. Remember that you are in my power."

"What is this proposal?" asked Joam.

Torres hesitated for a moment.

The attitude of this guilty man, whose life he held in his hands, was enough to astonish him. He had expected a stormy discussion and prayers and tears. He had before him a man convicted of the most heinous of crimes, and the man never flinched.

At length, crossing his arms, he said:

"You have a daughter!—I like her,—and I want to marry her!"

Apparently Joam Garral expected anything from such a man, and was as quiet as before. "And so," he said, "the worthy Torres is anxious to enter the family of a murderer and a thief?"

"I am the sole judge of what it suits me to do," said Torres. "I wish to be the son-in-law of Joam Garral, and I will."

"You ignore, then, that my daughter is going to marry Manoel Valdez!"

"You will break it off with Manoel Valdez!"

"And if my daughter declines?"

"If you tell her all, I have no doubt she would consent," was the impudent answer.

"All!"

"All, if necessary. Between her own feelings and the honor of her family and the life of her father she would not hesitate."

"You are a consummate scoundrel, Torres," quietly said Joam, whose coolness never forsook him.

"A scoundrel and a murderer were made to understand each other."

At these words Joam Garral arose, advanced to the adventurer, and looking him straight in the face, "Torres," he said, "if you wish to become one of the family of Joam Dacosta, you ought to know that Joam Dacosta was innocent of the crime for which he was condemned."

"Really!"

"And I add," replied Joam, "that you hold the proof of his innocence, and are keeping it back to proclaim it on the day when you marry his daughter."

"Fair play, Joam Garral," answered Torres, lowering his voice, "and when you have heard me out, you will see if you dare refuse me your daughter!"

"I am listening, Torres."

"Well," said the adventurer, half keeping back his words, as if he was sorry to let them escape from his lips, "I know you are innocent! I know it, for I know the true culprit, and I am in a position to prove your innocence."

"And the unhappy man who committed the crime?"

"Is dead."

"Dead!" exclaimed Joam Garral; and the word made him turn pale, in spite of himself, as if it had deprived him of all power of reinstatement.

"Dead," repeated Torres; "but this man, whom I knew a long time after his crime, and without knowing that he was a convict, had written out at length, in his own hand, the story of this affair of the diamonds, even to the smallest details. Feeling his end approaching, he was seized with remorse. He knew where Joam Dacosta had taken refuge, and under what name the innocent man had again begun a new life. He knew that he was rich, in the bosom of a happy family, but he knew also that there was no happiness for him. And this happiness he desired to add to the reputation to which he was entitled. But death came—he intrusted to me, his companion, to do what he could no longer do. He gave me the proofs of Dacosta's innocence for me to transmit to him, and he died."

"The man's name?" exclaimed Joam Garral, in a tone he could not control.

"You will know it when I am one of your family."

"And the writing?"

Joam Garral was ready to throw himself on Torres, to search him, to snatch from him the proofs of his innocence.

"The writing is in a safe place," replied Torres, "and you will not have it until your daughter has become my wife. Now will you still refuse me?"

"Yes," replied Joam, "but in return for that paper the half of my fortune is yours."

"The half of your fortune!" exclaimed Torres; "agreed, on condition that Minha brings it to me at her marriage."

"And it is thus that you respect the wishes of a dying man, of a criminal tortured by remorse, and who has charged

you to repair as much as he could the evil which he had done?"

"It is thus."

"Once more, Torres," said Joam Garral, "you are a consummate scoundrel."

"Be it so."

"And as I am not a criminal we were not made to understand one another."

"And you refuse?"

"I refuse."

"It will be your ruin, then, Joam Garral. Everything accuses you in the proceedings that have already taken place. You are condemned to death, and you know, in sentences for crimes of that nature, the government is forbidden the right of commuting the penalty. Denounced, you are taken; taken, you are executed. And I will denounce you."

Master as he was of himself, Joam could stand it no longer. He was about to rush on Torres.

A gesture from the rascal cooled his anger. "Take care," said Torres, "your wife knows not that she is the wife of Joam Dacosta, your children do not know they are the children of Joam Dacosta, and you are going to give them the information."

Joam Garral stopped himself. He regained his usual command over himself, and his features recovered their habitual calm.

"This discussion has lasted long enough," said he, moving toward the door, "and I know what there is left for me to do."

"Take care, Joam Garral!" said Torres, for the last time, for he could scarcely believe that his ignoble attempt at extortion had collapsed.

Joam Garral made him no answer. He threw back the door which opened under the veranda, made a sign to Torres to follow him, and they advanced toward the center of the jangada, where the family were assembled.

Benito, Manoel, and all of them, under a feeling of deep anxiety, had risen. They could see that the bearing of Torres was still menacing, and that the fire of anger still shone in his eyes.

In extraordinary contrast, Joam Garral was master of himself, and almost smiling.

Both of them stopped before Yaquita and her people. Not one dared to say a word to them.

It was Torres who, in a hollow voice, and with his customary impudence, broke the painful silence. "For the last time, Joam Garral," he said, "I ask you for a last reply!"

"And here is my reply." And addressing his wife—"Yaquita," he said, "peculiar circumstances oblige me to alter what we have formerly decided as to the marriage of Minha and Manoel."

"At last!" exclaimed Torres.

Joam Garral, without answering him, shot at the adventurer a glance of the deepest scorn.

But at the words, Manoel had felt his heart beat as if it would break. The girl arose, ashy pale, as if she would seek shelter by the side of her mother. Yaquita opened her arms to protect, to defend her.

"Father!" said Benito, who had placed himself between Joam Garral and Torres, "what were you going to say?"

"I was going to say," answered Joam Garral, raising his voice, "that to wait for our arrival in Para for the wedding of Minha and Manoel is to wait too long! The marriage will take place here, not later than to-morrow, on the jangada, with the aid of Padre Passanha, if, after a conversation I am about to have with Manoel, he agrees with me to defer it no longer."

"Ah, father! father!" exclaimed the young man.

"Wait a little before you call me so, Manoel!" replied Joam, in a tone of unspeakable suffering.

Here Torres, with crossed arms, gave the whole family a look of inconceivable insolence. "So that is your last word?" said he, extending his hand toward Joam Garral.

"No, that is not my last word."

"What is it, then?"

"This, Torres! I am master here! You will be off, if you please, and even if you do not please, and leave the jangada this very instant!"

"Yes, this instant!" exclaimed Benito; "or I will throw you overboard."

Torres shrugged his shoulders.

"No threats," he said; "they are of no use! It suits me also to land, and without delay. But you will remember me, Joam Garral. We shall not be long before we meet."

"If it only depends on me," answered Joam Garral, "we shall soon meet, and rather sooner, perhaps, than you will like. To-morrow I shall be with Judge Ribeiro, the first magistrate of the province, whom I have advised of my arrival at Manaos. If you dare, meet me there!"

"At Judge Ribeiro's?" said Torres, evidently disconcerted.

"At Judge Ribeiro's," answered Joam Garral.

And then, showing the pirogue to Torres, with a gesture of supreme contempt, Joam Garral ordered four of his people to land him without delay on the nearest point of the island. The scoundrel at last disappeared.

The family, who were still appalled, respected the silence of its chief; but Fragoso, comprehending scarce half the gravity of the situation, and carried away by his customary vivacity, came up to Joam Garral.

"If the wedding of Miss Minha and Mr. Manoel is to take place to-morrow on the raft——"

"Yours shall take place at the same time," kindly answered Joam Garral. And making a sign to Manoel, he retired to his room with him.

The interview between Joam and Manoel had lasted for half an hour, and it seemed a century to the family, when the door of the room was reopened.

Manoel came out alone; his face glowed with generous resolution.

Going up to Yaquita, he said, "My mother!" to Minha he said, "My wife!" to Benito he said, "My brother!" and, turning toward Lina and Fragoso, he said to all, "To-morrow!"

He knew all that had passed between Joam Garral and Torres. He knew that, counting on the protection of Judge Ribeiro, by means of a correspondence which he had had with him for a year past without speaking of it to his people, Joam Garral had at last succeeded in clearing himself and convincing him of his innocence. He knew that Joam Garral had boldly undertaken the voyage with the sole object of canceling the hateful proceedings of which he had been the victim, so as not to leave on his daughter and son-in-law the weight of the terrible situation which he had had to endure so long himself.

Yes, Manoel knew all this, and, further, he knew that

Joam Garral—or rather Joam Dacosta—was innocent, and his misfortunes made him even dearer and more devoted to him. What he did not know was that the material proof of the innocence of the fazender existed, and that this proof was in the hands of Torres. Joam Garral wished to reserve for the judge himself the use of this proof, which, if the adventurer had spoken truly, would demonstrate his innocence.

Manoel confined himself, then, to announcing that he was going to Padre Passanha to ask him to get things ready for the two weddings.

Next day, the 24th of August, scarcely an hour before the ceremony was to take place, a large pirogue came off from the left bank of the river and hailed the jangada. A dozen paddlers had swiftly brought it from Manaos, and with a few men it carried the chief of the police, who made himself known and came on board.

At the moment Joam Garral and his family, attired for the ceremony, were coming out of the house.

"Joam Garral?" asked the chief of the police, "you have also been Joam Dacosta; both names have been borne by the same man—I arrest you!"

At these words Yaquita and Minha, struck with stupor, stopped, without any power to move.

"My father a murderer?" exclaimed Benito, rushing toward Joam Garral.

By a gesture his father silenced him.

"I will only ask you one question," said Joam, with firm voice, addressing the chief of police. "Has the warrant in virtue of which you arrest me been issued against me by the justice at Manaos—by Judge Ribeiro?"

"No," answered the chief of police, "it was given to me, with an order for its immediate execution, by his substitute. Judge Ribeiro was struck with apoplexy yesterday evening, and died during the night at two o'clock, without having recovered consciousness."

"Dead!" exclaimed Joam Garral, crushed for a moment by the news—"dead! dead!"

But soon raising his head, he said to his wife and children, "Judge Ribeiro alone knew that I was innocent, my dear ones. The death of the judge is fatal to me, but that is no reason for me to despair."

And, turning toward Manoel, "Heaven help us!" he said to him; "we shall see if truth will come to the earth from above."

The chief of the police made a sign to his men, who advanced to secure Joam Garral.

"But speak, father!" shouted Benito, mad with despair; "say one word, and we shall contest even by force this horrible mistake of which you are the victim!"

"There is no mistake here, my son," replied Joam Garral; "Joam Dacosta and Joam Garral are one. I am in truth Joam Dacosta! I am the honest man whom a legal error unjustly doomed to death five-and-twenty years ago in the place of the true culprit! That I am quite innocent I swear before Heaven, once for all, on your heads, my children, and on the head of your mother!"

"All communication between you and yours is now forbidden," said the chief of police. "You are my prisoner, Joam Garral, and I will religiously execute my warrant."

Joam restrained by a gesture his dismayed children and servants.

"Let the justice of man be done, while we wait for the justice of God!"

And with his head unbent, he stepped into the pirogue.

It seemed, indeed, as though of all present Joam Garral was the only one whom this fearful thunderbolt, which had fallen so unexpectedly on his head, had failed to overwhelm.

THE END OF BOOK ONE

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